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The morning star of song who made,

His music heard below,

Don Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath,

Preluded those melodious bursts that fill,

The spacious times of Great Elizabeth,

With sounds that echo still

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1340-1400

Before William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer was the pre-eminent English poet, and he remains in the top tier of the English canon. He was also the most significant poet to write in Middle English. Chaucer was born in the early 1340s to a fairly rich, well-to-do, though not aristocratic family. His father, John Chaucer, was a vintner and deputy to the king's butler. His family's financial success came from work in the wine and leather businesses, and they had considerable inherited property in London. Little information exists about Chaucer's education, but his writings demonstrate a close familiarity with a number of important books of his contemporaries and of earlier times (such as Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy). Chaucer likely was fluent in several languages, including French, Italian, and Latin. Sons of wealthy London merchants could receive good educations at this time, and there is reason to believe that, if Chaucer did not attend one of the schools on Thames Street near his boyhood home, then he was at least well-educated at home. Certainly his work showcases a passion for reading a huge range of literature, classical and modern.

Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster. This was a conventional arrangement in which sons of middle-class households were placed in royal service so that they could obtain a courtly education. Two years later, Chaucer served in the army under Edward III and was captured during an unsuccessful offensive at Reims, although he was later ransomed. Chaucer served under a number of diplomatic missions.

By 1366 Chaucer had married Philippa Pan who had been in service with the Countess of Ulster. Chaucer married well for his position, for Philippa Chaucer received pension from the queen consort of Edward III. Philippa's sister Katherine de Roet was John of Gaunt's mistress for twenty years before becoming the Duke's wife. Through this connection, John of Gaunt was Chaucer's "kinsman." Chaucer himself secured an annuity as yeoman of the king and was listed as one of the king's esquires.

Chaucer's first published work was The Book of the Duchess, a poem of over 1,300 lines, supposed to be an elegy for Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, addressed to her widower, the Duke. For this first of his important poems, which was published in 1370, Chaucer used the dream-vision form, a genre made popular by the highly influential 13th-century French poem of courtly love, the Roman de la Rose, which Chaucer translated into English. Throughout the following decade, Chaucer continued with his diplomatic career, traveling to Italy for negotiations to open a Genoa port to Britain as well as military negotiations with Milan. During his missions to Italy, Chaucer encountered the work of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, which were later to have profound influence upon his own writing. In 1374 Chaucer was appointed comptroller of the customs and subsidy of wool, skins, and tanned hides for the Port of London, his first position away from the British court. Chaucer's only major work during this period was House of Fame, a poem of around 2,000 lines in dream-vision form, which ends so abruptly that some scholars consider it unfinished.

In October 1385, Chaucer was appointed a justice of the peace for Kent, and in August 1386 he became knight of the shire for Kent. Around the time of his wife's death in 1387, Chaucer moved to Greenwich and later to Kent. Changing political circumstances

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السلام علیکم ورحمۃ اللہ وبرکاتہ:

معزز ممبران: آپ کا وٹس ایپ گروپ ایڈمن "**اردو بکس**" آپ سے مخاطب ہے۔

آپ تمام ممبران سے گزارش ہے کہ:

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- گروپ میں معزز، پڑھے لکھے، سلجھے ہوئے ممبرز موجود ہیں اخلاقیات کی پابندی کریں اور گروپ رولز کو فالو کریں بصورت دیگر معزز ممبرز کی بہتری کی خاطر ریموو کر دیا جائے گا۔
- کوئی بھی ممبر کسی بھی ممبر کو انباکس میں میسیج، مس کال، کال نہیں کرے گا۔ رپورٹ پر فوری ریموو کر کے کاروائی عمل میں لائے جائے گی۔
- ہمارے کسی بھی گروپ میں سیاسی و فرقہ واریت کی بحث کی قطعاً کوئی گنجائش نہیں ہے۔
- اگر کسی کو بھی گروپ کے متعلق کسی قسم کی شکایت یا تجویز کی صورت میں ایڈمن سے رابطہ کیجئے۔
- سب سے اہم بات:

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- اردو کتب / عمران سیریز یا سٹڈی گروپ میں ایڈ ہونے کے لئے ایڈمن سے وٹس ایپ پر بذریعہ میسیج رابطہ کریں اور جواب کا انتظار فرمائیں۔ برائے مہربانی اخلاقیات کا خیال رکھتے ہوئے موبائل پر کال یا ایم ایس کرنے کی کوشش ہر گز نہ کریں۔ ورنہ گروپس سے تو ریموو کیا ہی جائے گا بلاک بھی کیا جائے گا۔

نوٹ: ہمارے کسی گروپ کی کوئی فیس نہیں ہے۔ سب فی سبیل اللہ ہے

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معزز ممبران: آپ کا وٹس ایپ گروپ ایڈ من "**اردو بکس**" آپ سے مخاطب ہے۔

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eventually led to Chaucer falling out of favor with the royal court and leaving Parliament, but when Richard II became King of England, Chaucer regained royal favor.

During this period Chaucer used writing primarily as an escape from public life. His works included Parlement of Foules, a poem of 699 lines. This work is a dream-vision for St. Valentine's Day that makes use of the myth that each year on that day the birds gather before the goddess Nature to choose their mates. This work was heavily influenced by Boccaccio and Dante.

Chaucer's next work was Troilus and Criseyde, which was influenced by The Consolation of Philosophy, which Chaucer himself translated into English. Chaucer took some the plot of Troilus from Boccaccio's Filostrato. This 8,000-line rime-royal poem recounts the love story of Troilus, son of the Trojan king Priam, and Criseyde, widowed daughter of the deserter priest Calkas, against the background of the Trojan War. (Compare Shakespeare's version in Troilus and Cressida.)

The Canterbury Tales secured Chaucer's literary reputation. It is his great literary accomplishment, a compendium of stories by pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury. Chaucer introduces each of these pilgrims in vivid, brief sketches in the General Prologue and intersperses the twenty-four tales with short dramatic scenes with lively exchanges. Chaucer did not complete the full plan for the tales, and surviving manuscripts leave some doubt as to the exact order of the tales that remain. However, the work is sufficiently complete to be considered a unified book rather than a collection of unfinished fragments. The Canterbury Tales is a lively mix of a variety of genres told by travelers from all aspects of society. Among the genres included are courtly romance, fabliaux, saint's biography, allegorical tale, beast fable, and medieval sermon.

Information concerning Chaucer's descendants is not fully clear. It is likely that he and Philippa had two sons and two daughters. Thomas Chaucer died in 1400; he was a large landowner and political officeholder, and his daughter, Alice, became Duchess of Suffolk. Little is known about Lewis Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's youngest son. Of Chaucer's two daughters, Elizabeth became a nun, while Agnes was a lady-in-waiting for the coronation of Henry IV in 1399. Public records indicate that Chaucer had no descendants living after the fifteenth century.

The Age of Chaucer (1340-1400)

Introduction: - For a profound and comprehensive study of an author's literary work is required, among other things, a thorough understanding of the age which produced and nurtured him. Without acquaintance with the historical context our evaluation and apprehension of literature is bound to be lop-sided, if not altogether warped and garbled. Every man is a child of his age. He is influenced by it though, if he is a great man, he may influence it also. A great writer like Shakespeare or Chaucer is generally said to be "not of an age, but of all ages." But, in spite of his universal appeal, the fact remains that even he could not have escaped "the spirit of the age” in which he lived and moved and had his being.

So, for understanding him and his works in their fullness it is imperative to familiarize ourselves with the influential currents of thought and feeling and sensibility (not to speak of the socio-politico-economic conditions) obtaining in the times in which he flourished. Probably the reverse of it is also true: we may acquire some understanding of these tendencies and currents, the ethos of the age, through the writer himself. Emphasizing this point, W. H. Hudson says: "Every man belongs to his race and age; no matter how marked his personality, the spirit of his race and age finds expression through him" The same critic expresses the relationship between history and literature. He says, "Ordinary English history is our nation's biography, its literature is its autobiography; in the one we read the story of its actions and practical achievements; in the other the story of its intellectual and moral development." Though Chaucer transcends the limits of his generation and creates something which is of interest to the future generation too, yet he represents much of what his age stands for. And therein lies his greatness.

Chaucer's Age-Both Medieval and Modern: - Chaucer's age-like most historical ages-was an age of transition. This transition implies a shift from the medieval to the modern times, the emergence of the English nation from the "dark ages" to the age of enlightenment. Though some elements associated with modernity were coming into prominence, yet mostly and essentially the age was medieval-unscientific, superstitious, chivalrous, religious-minded, and "backward" in most respects. The fourteenth century, as J. M. Manly puts it in The Cambridge History of English Literature, was "a dark epoch in the history of England". However, the silver lining of modernity did succeed in piercing, here and there, the thick darkness of ignorance and superstition. In fact, the age of Chaucer was not stagnant (stationary): it was inching its way steadily and surely to the dawn of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which were yet a couple of centuries ahead. Robert Dudely French observes: "It was an age of restlessness, amid the ferment (excitement) of new life that Chaucer lived and wrote. Old things and new appear side by side upon his pages, and in his poetry we can study the essential spirit, both of the age that was passing and of the age that was to come." What are these "old things and new:' and what made the age restless? The answer will be provided if we discuss the chief events and features of the age.

"The Hundred Years' War": - The period between 1337 and 1453 is marked by a long succession of skirmishes between France and England, which are collectively known as the "Hundred Years War". Under the able and warlike guidance of King Edward III (1327-1377) England won a number of glorious victories, particularly at Crecy, Poietiers, and Agincourt. The French might beaten and Edward was once acknowledged even the king of France. But later, after his demise and with the succession of the incompetent Richard II, the English might waned and the French were able to secure tangible gains. The war influenced the English character in the following two ways: the fostering of nationalistic sentiment; and the demolition of some social barriers between different classes of society.

It was obviously natural for the conflict to have engendered among the English a strong feeling of national solidarity and patriotic fervour. But, as Compton-Rickett reminds us, "the fight is memorable not merely for stimulating the pride of English men." It is important, too, for the second reason given above. It was not the aristocracy alone which secured the victory for England. The aristocracy was vitally supported by the lowly archers whose feats with the bow were a force to reckon with. Froissart, the French chronicler, referring to the English archers says: "They, let fly their arrows so wholly

together and so thick that it seemed snow". The recognition of the services of the humble archers brought in a note of democratisation in the country, and the age-old "iron curtain" between the nobility and the proletariat developed a few chinks. This was an advance from medievalism to modernism.

The Age of Chivalry: - Nevertheless, the dawn of the modern era was yet far away. Compton-Rickett observes: "Chaucer's England is 'Still characteristically medieval, and nowhere is the conservative feeling more strongly marked than in the persistence of chivalry. This strange amalgam of love, war, and religion so far from exhibiting any signs of decay, reached perhaps its fullest development at this time. More than two centuries were to elapse before it was finally killed-by the satirical pen of Cervantes." The Knight in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales is typical of his kind. Even the tale he narrates concerns the adventures of two true knights-Arcite and Palamon.

The Black Death, Peasants' Revolt, and Labour Unrest: - In the age of Chaucer most people were victims of poverty, uncleanliness, and filth (epidemic). Even well-educated nobles eyed soap with suspicion, and learned physicians often forbade bathing as harmful for health. That is why England was often visited by epidemics, especially plague. The severest attack of this dread epidemic came in 1348. It was called "the Black Death" because black, knotty boils appeared on the bodies of the hopeless victims. It is estimated that about a million human beings were swept away by this epidemic. That roughly makes one-third of the total population of England at that time.

One immediate consequence of this pestilence was the acute shortage of working hands. The socio-economic system of England lay hopelessly paralysed. Labourers and villains who happened to survive started demanding much higher wages. But neither their employers nor the king nor Parliament was ready to meet these demands. A number of severe regulations were passed asking workers to work at the old rates of payment. This occasioned a great deal of resentment which culminated in the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 during the reign of Richard II. The peasants groaning under the weight of injustice and undue official severity were led to London by the Kentish priest John Ball. He preached the dignity of labour and asked the nobles:

When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?

The king, overawed (pressurized) by the mass of peasantry armed with such weapons as hatchets, spades, and pitchforks, promised reform but later shelved his promise. The "Peasants' Revolt" is, according to Compton-Rickett, "a dim foreshadowing of those industrial troubles that lay in the distant future." Chaucer in his Nun's Priest's Tale refers to Jack Straw who with Wat Tylar raised the banner of revolt.

R. K. Root thus sums up the significance of this uprising: "This revolt, suppressed by the courage and good judgment of the boy King, Richard II, though barren of any direct and immediate result, exerted a lasting influence on the temper of the lower classes, fostering in them a spirit of independence which made them no longer a negligible quantity in the life of the nation". This was another line of progress towards modernism.

The Church: - In the age of Chaucer, the Church became a hotbed of profligacy, corruption, and materialism. The overlord of the Church, namely, the Pope of Rome,

himself had ambitions and aptitudes other than spiritual. W. H. Hudson maintains in this connection: "Of spiritual zeal and energy very little was now left in the country. The greater prelates heaped up wealth, and lived in a godless and worldly way; the rank and file of the clergy were ignorant and careless; the mendicant friars were notorious for their greed and profligacy." John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, whom he calls "moral Gower" (on account of his didactic tendency) thus pictures the condition of the Church in his Prologue to Confessio Amantis:

Lo, thus ye-broke is cristes Folde:
Whereof the flock without guide
Devoured is on every side,
In lacks of hem that been urrware
In chepherdes, which her wit beware
Upon the world in other halve.

Another contemporary has to say this about the priests "Our priests are now become blind, dark and beclouded. There is neither shaven crown on their head, nor modesty in their words, nor temperance in their food, nor even chastity in their deeds." If this was the condition of the ecclesiasts, we can easily imagine that of the laity. Well does Chaucer say in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales: "If gold rust, what iron shall do?" Chaucer himself was indifferent to any reform, but his character-sketches of the ecclesiastical figures in The Canterbury Tales leave no uncertainty regarding the corruption which had crept into the ecclesiastical rank and file. The round-bellied epicurean monk, the merry and devil-may-care friar, and the unscrupulous pardoner are fairly typical of his age.

This widespread and deep-rooted corruption had already begun to provoke the attention of some reformists the most prominent of whom was John Wyclif (13207-84) who has been called "the morning star of the Reformation." He started what is called the Lollards's Movement. His aim was to eradicate the evil and corruption which had become a part and parcel of the Church. He sent his "poor priests" to all parts of the country for spreading his message of simplicity, purity, and austerity. His self-appointed task was to take Christianity back to its original purity and spirituality. He exhorted people not to have anything to do with the corrupt ministers of the Pope and to have faith only in the Word of God as enshrined in the Bible, To make the teaching of the Bible accessible to the common masses he with the help of some of his disciples translated the Bible from Latin into the native tongue. He also wrote a number of tracts embodying his teaching. His translation of the Bible was, in the words of W. H. Hudson, "the first translation of the scriptures into any modern vernacular tongue." That Chaucer was sympathetic to the Lollards' Movement is evident from the element of idealization which characterizes his portrait of the "Poor Parson" in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales. The movement launched by Wyclif and his followers in the age of Chaucer was an adumbration of the Reformation which was to come in the sixteenth century to wean England from the papal influence.

Literary and Intellectual Tendencies: - Latin and French were the dominant languages in fourteenth-century England. However, in the later half of the century English came to its own, thanks to the sterling work done by Chaucer and some others like Langland, Gower, and Wyclif who wrote in English and wrote well. The English language itself was in a fluid state of being, and was divided into a number of dialects.

The Universities of Cambridge and Oxford employed Latin as the medium of instruction. Latin was also the language of the fashionable who cultivated it as a social necessity. We recall here Chaucer's Summoner who "wolde speke no word but Latyn" after having drunk "well"! The contribution of Chaucer towards the standardization and popularization of the English language cannot be over-estimated. As regards his contribution to English poetry, he has well been characterised as the father of English poetry. No doubt there were other poets contemporaneous with him Langland, Gower, and a few more, but Chaucer is as head and shoulders among them as Shakespeare is among the Elizabethan dramatists. He stands like a majestic oak in a shrubbery. The English prose, too, was coming to itself. Mandeville's travelogues and Wyclif s reformative pamphlets give one a feeling that the English prose was on its way to standardization and popular acclamation.

In another way, too, the age of Chaucer stands between the medieval and the modern life. There was in this age some sort of a minor Renaissance. The dawn of the real Renaissance in England was yet about two centuries ahead, yet in the age of Chaucer there are signs of growing influence of the ancients on native literature. Chaucer1 own poetry was influenced by the Italian writer Boccaccio (1313-75) and to a lesser extent, Petrarch (1304-74). The frameworks of Boccaccio's Decameron and of Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales are almost similar. However, it is somewhat doubtful if Chaucer had read the Italian writer. It was through the work of the two above-named Italian writers that humanism made its way into-English intellectual culture. Well does Compton-Rickett observe: "Chaucer's world is medieval; but beneath his medievalism the leaven of the Renaissance is already at work."

Literary Influences on Chaucer's Poetry

It is convenient to divide Chaucer's literary output into three stages, which show three distinct influences on the development of his poetry:

The French Period: Chaucer's early poetry was directly influenced by contemporary French poetry. He composed in his wild youthful days a number of love poems, none of which have survived, but which gave him some fame as a poet. It is supposed that A B C a prayer to the Virgin, is the first of his extant poems. He translated some portions of the famous French work Roman de la Rose, an elaborate love allegory. Its translation helped Chaucer to fashion his style. He cultivated an allegorical style. He learnt from French poetry the charm of fluent simplicity, complete correspondence of words and thoughts, constant restraint in the expression of emotion and satire. Chaucer wrote in 1369 The Book of Duchessee on the death of Blanche, John of Gaunt's wife. It is an allegory in the manner of reigning French school, but Chaucer gave his elegy freshness and seeming sincerity.

The Italian Period (1372-1384): Chaucer's Italian period is characterised by variety and new technical innovations in his poetry. During his visits to Italy Chaucer saw a new world of art and literature which had reached an astonishing excellence. He read Dante's Divine Comedia, Petrarch's Sonnets and Boccaccio's Decameron. In Italy he saw the dawn of Renaissance, which, to some extent, influenced his poetry which is secular and humanistic in spirit. Moody and Lovett remark: "The unquenchable curiosity of the men of Renaissance was his, more than a century before the Renaissance really began to affect England. He, too, shared their thirst for expression. The great books he had come

to know in Italy gave hi_n no peace until he should equal or surpass them." The important works which he produced in emulation of the Italian masters are the House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, Troylus and Cryseyde and The Legend of Good Women.

The House of Fame (1382) is a dream allegory, which shows Dante's influence. It is remarkable for the rare combination of lofty thought and simple, homely language, and the presentation of genuine Chaucerian humour. The Legend of Good Women (1385), the unfinished work, was originally planned to contain nineteen tales of virtuous women of antiquity. But in the extant volume it consists of eight accomplished tales and the ninth only begun. It is conspicuous for its masterly narrative, particularly in the portion dealing with Cleopatra, and the skillful handling of the heroic couplet in English for the first time. Troylus and Cryseydc is founded on Boccaccio's Filostrato. It marks a significant development in Chaucer's poetic career. He uses his material very freely and with great artistic ability. In it he "reflects the ideals of his own age and society, and so gives to the whole story a dramatic force and beauty which it had never known before." The characters of Cryseyde and Pandarus reveal a new subtlety of psychological development, and reveal Chaucer's growing insight into human motives. Troylus and Cryseyde is considered as Chaucer's best narrative work. The rhyme royal stanza is used with much deftness and beauty. Chaucer also wrote the Story of Griselda (The Clerk's Tale) and The Story of Constance during this period.

The English Period (1384-1390): In this period Chaucer "becomes independent, relying upon himself entirely even for the use t which he puts his own borrowed themes." A few smaller poems which belong to this period are Former Age, Fortune, Truth, Gentilesse and The Lak of Stedfastnesse, but the crowning and monumental work of this period is The Canterbury Tales.

The Plan of 'The Canterbury Tales': The plan of the Tales was probably adopted soon after 1386, in which year Chaucer composed the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. They are not, and cannot be looked on as a whole. Many were written independently, and they fitted into the framework of the Prologue. Many which he intended to write were never written. The whole existing body of the Tales was completed before the close of 1390. The composition of the General Prologue to the tales is commonly associated with 1387.

The manner in which Chaucer knitted the tales together was very simple, and likely to please the English people. The Canterbury Tales is a collection of twenty-four tales in verse and prose, some incomplete, told as entertainment by a group of pilgrims riding from London to the shrine of Thomas A. Beckett at Canterbury. Chaucer had probably made the pilgrimage to Canterbury in the spring of 1385 or 1387, and was led by this experience to the framework in which he set his pictures of life. For the general idea of the tales Chaucer was indebted to Boccaccio, but "in nearly every important feature the work is essentially English". To realise his purpose Chaucer grouped around the jovial host of the Tabard Inn twenty-nine pilgrims, including himself, of every class of society in England. He sat them on horseback to ride to Canterbury and home again, intending to make each of them tell tales. But the company never reaches Canterbury, and only twenty-three pilgrims get their turn. Some tales are left unfinished. There are two prose tales, Chaucer's own Tale of Melibeus and The Parson's Tale. The rest of the tales are composed in the decasyllabic or heroic couplet.

In the famous Prologue, Chaucer makes us acquainted with the various characters of his drama. The twenty-nine characters are carefully chosen types, who represent various segments of contemporary society. Endowed with creative imagination Chaucer individualised his characters. All of them are fully realized figures with an importance of their own. F. N. Robinson remarks about Chaucer's characters: "Chaucer's pilgrims are far more vivid and personal than the medieval figures with which they have been compared." William J. Long also remarks: "Chaucer is the first English writer to bring the atmosphere of romantic interest about the men and women and the daily work of one's own world, which is the aim of nearly all modern literature.

Chaucer assigned to a pilgrim a tale suited to his character and vocation. The tales are of astonishing variety and give us a true and faithful picture of differing aspects of medieval life in England. Stopford A. Brooke remarks: "The Tales themselves take in the whole range of the poetry and the life of the middle ages; the legend of the saint, the romance of the knight, the wonderful fables of the traveller, the coarse tale of common life, the love story, the allegory, the animal-fable and the satirical lay."

Chaucer emerges as the first great story-teller in verse in The Canterbury Tales. All the best tales are told easily, gracefully and sincerely. The tales are remarkable for the dramatic quality. F. N. Robinson says: "In fact the pilgrimage is a continuous and lively drama, in which the stories contribute to the action. Because of this sustained dramatic interest and the vivid reality of characters, as well as for the inclusive representation of English society, The Canterbury Tales has been called a Human comedy. The implied comparison with Balzac's great series of stories of the life of modern France is not inappropriate."

In The Canterbury Tales Chaucer made English into a true means of poetry and literature. He developed the resources of English language for literary use, and set an example which was followed by a long line of poets.

In Tales Chaucer appears as a great humorist who has a consummate knowledge of human life. His humour is rich, tolerant, profound and sane, devoid of spite and cynicism. He also had a keen sense of pathos in human life. He can bring tears into our eyes, and he can make us smile or be sad as he pleases.

The Canterbury Tales is the first finest poetic testament of England. It has coherence and imaginative drive of a great work of literature, and presents a firmly realized view of life. Of all medieval poems, The Canterbury Tales gives a modern reader the strongest sense of contact with the life and manners of fourteenth-century England.

Background to “The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales”

The Canterbury Tales is at once one of the most famous and most frustrating works of literature ever written. Since its composition in late 1300s, critics have continued to mine new riches from its complex ground, and started new arguments about the text and its interpretation. Chaucer’s richly detailed text, so Dryden said, was “God’s plenty”, and the rich variety of the Tales is partly perhaps the reason for its success. It is both one long narrative (of the pilgrims and their pilgrimage) and an encyclopedia of shorter narratives; it is both one large drama, and a compilation of most literary forms known to

medieval literature: romance, fabliau, Breton lay, moral fable, verse romance, beast fable, prayer to the Virgin… and so the list goes on. No single literary genre dominates the Tales. The tales include romantic adventures, fabliaux, saint's biographies, animal fables, religious allegories and even a sermon, and range in tone from pious, moralistic tales to lewd and vulgar sexual farces. More often than not, moreover, the specific tone of the tale is extremely difficult to firmly pin down.

This, indeed, is down to one of the key problems of interpreting the Tales themselves - voice: how do we ever know who is speaking? Because Chaucer, early in the Tales, promises to repeat the exact words and style of each speaker as best he can remember it, there is always a tension between Chaucer and the pilgrim's voice he ventriloquizes as he re-tells his tale: even the "Chaucer" who is a character on the pilgrim has a distinct and deliberately un Chaucerian voice. Is it the Merchant's voice – and the Merchant's opinion – or Chaucer's? Is it Chaucer the character or Chaucer the writer? If it is Chaucer's, are we supposed to take it at face value, or view it ironically?

No one knows for certain when Chaucer began to write the Tales – the pilgrimage is usually dated 1387, but that date is subject to much scholarly argument – but it is certain that Chaucer wrote some parts of the Tales at different times, and went back and added Tales to the melting pot. The Knight's Tale, for example, was almost certainly written earlier than the Canterbury project as a separate work, and then adapted into the voice of the Knight; and the Second Nun's Tale, as well as probably the Monk's, probably have a similar compositional history.

Chaucer drew from a rich variety of literary sources to create the Tales, though his principal debt is likely to Boccaccio's Decameron, in which ten nobles from Florence, to escape the plague, stay in a country villa and amuse each other by each telling tales. Boccaccio likely had a significant influence on Chaucer. The Knight's Tale was an English version of a tale by Boccaccio, while six of Chaucer's tales have possible sources in the Decameron: the Miller's Tale, the Reeve's, the Clerk's, the Merchant's, the Franklin's, and the Shipman's. However, Chaucer's pilgrims to Canterbury form a wider range of society compared to Boccaccio's elite storytellers, allowing for greater differences in tone and substance.

The text of the Tales itself does not survive complete, but in ten fragments Due to the fact that there are no links made between these ten fragments in most cases, it is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely in which order Chaucer wanted the tales to be read.

Prologue to the Canterbury Tales : Summary

"When April comes with his sweet, fragrant showers, which pierce the dry ground of March, and bathe every root of every plant in sweet liquid, then people desire to go on pilgrimages." Thus begins the famous opening to The Canterbury Tales. The narrator (a constructed version of Chaucer himself) is first discovered staying at the Tabard Inn in Southwark (in London), when a company of twenty-nine people descend on the inn, preparing to go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. After talking to them, he agrees to join them on their pilgrimage.

Yet before the narrator goes any further in the tale, he describes the circumstances and the social rank of each pilgrim. He describes each one in turn, starting with the highest status individuals.

The Knight is described first, as befits a 'worthy man' of high status. The Knight has fought in the Crusades in numerous countries, and always been honored for his worthiness and courtesy. Everywhere he went, the narrator tells us, he had a 'sovereyn prys' (which could mean either an 'outstanding reputation', or a price on his head for the fighting he has done). The Knight is dressed in a 'fustian' tunic, made of coarse cloth, which is stained by the rust from his coat of chainmail.

The Knight brings with him his son, The Squire, a lover and a lusty bachelor, only twenty years old. The Squire cuts a rather effeminate figure, his clothes embroidered with red and white flowers, and he is constantly singing or playing the flute. He is the only pilgrim (other than, of course, Chaucer himself) who explicitly has literary ambitions: he 'koude songes make and wel endite' (line 95).

The Yeoman (a freeborn servant) also travels along with the Knight's entourage, and is clad in coat and hood of green. The Yeoman is excellent at caring for arrows, and travels armed with a huge amount of weaponry: arrows, a bracer (arm guard), a sword, a buckler, and a dagger as sharp as a spear. He wears an image of St. Christopher on his breast.

Having now introduced the Knight (the highest ranking pilgrim socially), the narrator now moves on to the clergy, beginning with The Prioress, called 'Madame Eglantine' (or, in modern parlance, Mrs. Sweetbriar). She could sweetly sing religious services, speaks fluent French and has excellent table manners. She is so charitable and piteous, that she would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap, and she has two small dogs with her. She wears a brooch with the inscription 'Amor vincit omnia' ('Love conquers all'). The Prioress brings with her her 'chapeleyne' (secretary), the Second Nun.

The Monk is next, an extremely fine and handsome man who loves to hunt, and who follows modern customs rather than old traditions. This is no bookish monk, studying in a cloister, but a man who keeps greyhounds to hunt the hare. The Monk is well-fed, fat, and his eyes are bright, gleaming like a furnace in his head.

The Friar who follows him is also wanton and merry, and he is a 'lymytour' by trade (a friar licensed to beg in certain districts). He is extremely well beloved of franklins (landowners) and worthy woman all over the town. He hears confession and gives absolution, and is an excellent beggar, able to earn himself a farthing wherever he went. His name is Huberd.

The Merchant wears a forked beard, motley clothes and sat high upon his horse. He gives his opinion very solemnly, and does excellent business as a merchant, never being in any debt. But, the narrator ominously remarks, 'I noot how men hym calle' (I don't know how men call him, or think of him).

The Clerk follows the Merchant. A student of Oxford university, he would rather have twenty books by Aristotle than rich clothes or musical instruments, and thus is dressed in a threadbare short coat. He only has a little gold, which he tends to spend on books

and learning, and takes huge care and attention of his studies. He never speaks a word more than is needed, and that is short, quick and full of sentence (the Middle-English word for 'meaningfulness' is a close relation of 'sententiousness').

The Man of Law (referred to here as 'A Sergeant of the Lawe') is a judicious and dignified man, or, at least, he seems so because of his wise words. He is a judge in the court of assizes, by letter of appointment from the king, and because of his high standing receives many grants. He can draw up a legal document, the narrator tells us, and no-one can find a flaw in his legal writings. Yet, despite all this money and social worth, the Man of Law rides only in a homely, multi-coloured coat.

A Franklin travels with the Man of Law. He has a beard as white as a daisy, and of the sanguine humour (dominated by his blood). The Franklin is a big eater, loving a piece of bread dipped in wine, and is described (though not literally!) as Epicurus' son: the Franklin lives for culinary delight. His house is always full of meat pie, fish and meat, so much so that it 'snewed in his hous of mete and drynke'. He changes his meats and drinks according to what foods are in season.

A Haberdasher and a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer and a Tapycer (weaver of tapestries) are next described, all of them clothed in the same distinctive guildsman's dress. Note that none of these pilgrims, in the end, actually tell a tale.

A Cook had been brought along to boil the chicken up with marrow bones and spices, but this particular Cook knows a draught of ale very well indeed, according to the narrator. The Cook could roast and simmer and boil and fry, make stews and hashes and bake a pie well, but it was a great pity that, on his shin, he has an ulcer.

A Shipman from Dartmouth is next - tanned brown from the hot summer sun, riding upon a carthorse, and wearing a gown of coarse woolen cloth which reaches to his knees. The Shipman had, many times, drawn a secret draught of wine on board ship, while the merchant was asleep. The Shipman has weathered many storms, and knows his trade: he knows the locations of all the harbors from Gotland to Cape Finistere. His shape is called 'the Maudelayne'.

A Doctor of Medicine is the next pilgrim described, clad in red and blue, and no-one in the world can match him in speaking about medicine and surgery. He knows the cause of every illness, what humor engenders them, and how to cure them. He is a perfect practitioner of medicine, and he has apothecaries ready to send him drugs and mixtures. He is well-read in the standard medical authorities, from the Greeks right through to Chaucer's contemporary Gilbertus Anglicus. The Doctor, however, has not studied the Bible.

The Wife of Bath was 'somdel deef' (a little deaf, as her tale will later expand upon) and that was a shame. The Wife of Bath is so adept at making cloth that she surpasses even the cloth-making capitals of Chaucer's world, Ypres and Ghent, and she wears coverchiefs (linen coverings for the head) which must (the narrator assumes) have 'weyeden ten pound'. She had had five husbands through the church door, and had been at Jerusalem, Rome and Boulogne on pilgrimage. She is also described as 'Gat-tothed' (traditionally denoting lasciviousness), and as keeping good company, she knows all the

answers about love: 'for she koude of that art the olde daunce' (she knew the whole dance as far as love is concerned!).

A good religious man, A Parson of a Town, is next described, who, although poor in goods, is rich in holy thought and work. He's a learned man, who truly preaches Christ's gospel, and devoutly teaches his parishioners. He travels across his big parish to visit all of his parishioners, on his feet, carrying a staff in his hand. He is a noble example to his parishioners ('his sheep', as they are described) because he acts first, and preaches second (or, in Chaucer's phrase, 'first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte'). The narrator believes that there is no better priest to be found anywhere.

With the Parson travels a Plowman (who does not tell a tale), who has hauled many cartloads of dung in his time. He is a good, hard-working man, who lives in peace and charity, and treats his neighbor as he would be treated. He rides on a mare, and wears a tabard (a workman's loose garment).

A Miller comes next, in this final group of pilgrims (now at the bottom of the class scale!). He is big-boned and has big muscles, and always wins the prize in wrestling matches. There's not a door that he couldn't lift off its hinges, or break it by running at it head-first. He has black, wide nostrils, carries a sword and a buckler (shield) by his side, and has a mouth like a great furnace. He's good at stealing corn and taking payment for it three times. But then, Chaucer implies, there are no honest millers.

A noble Manciple (a business agent, purchaser of religious provisions) is the next pilgrim to be described, and a savvy financial operator. Though a common man, the Manciple can run rings round even a 'heep of lerned men'. The Manciple, his description ominously ends, 'sette hir aller cappe': deceived them all.

The Reeve, a slender, choleric man, long-legged and lean ("ylyk a staf"). He knows exactly how much grain he has, and is excellent at keeping his granary and his grain bin. There is no bailiff, herdsman or servant about whom the Reeve does not know something secret or treacherous; as a result, they are afraid of him 'as of the deeth'.

The Summoner is next, his face fire-red and pimpled, with narrow eyes. He has a skin disease across his black brows, and his beard (which has hair falling out of it) and he is extremely lecherous. There is, the narrator tells us, no ointment or cure, or help him to remove his pimples. He loves drinking wine which is as 'reed as blood', and eating leeks, onions and garlic. He knows how to trick someone.

Travelling with the Summoner is a noble Pardoner, his friend and his companion (in what sense Chaucer intends the word 'compeer', meaning companion, nobody knows) and the last pilgrim-teller to be described. He sings loudly 'Come hither, love to me', and has hair as yellow as wax, which hangs like flaxen from his head. He carries a wallet full of pardons in his lap, brimful of pardons come from Rome. The Pardoner is sexually ambiguous - he has a thin, boyish voice, and the narrator wonders whether he is a 'geldyng or a mare' (a eunuch or a homosexual).

The narrator writes that he has told us now of the estate (the class), the array (the clothing), and the number of pilgrims assembled in this company. He then makes an important statement of intent for what is to come: he who repeats a tale told by another

man, the narrator says, must repeat it as closely as he possibly can to the original teller - and thus, if the tellers use obscene language, it is not our narrator's fault.

The Host is the last member of the company described, a large man with bright, large eyes - and an extremely fair man. The Host welcomes everyone to the inn, and announces the pilgrimage to Canterbury, and decides that, on the way there, the company shall 'talen and pleye' (to tell stories and amuse themselves). Everyone consents to the Host's plan for the game, and he then goes on to set it out.

What the Host describes is a tale-telling game, in which each pilgrim shall tell two tales on the way to Canterbury, and two more on the way home; whoever tells the tale 'of best sentence and moost solas' shall have supper at the cost of all of the other pilgrims, back at the Inn, once the pilgrimage returns from Canterbury. The pilgrims agree to the Host's suggestion, and agree to accord to the Host's judgment as master of the tale-telling game. Everyone then goes to bed.

The next morning, the Host awakes, raises everyone up, and 'in a flok' the pilgrimage rides towards 'the Wateryng of Seint Thomas', a brook about two miles from London. The Host asks the pilgrims to draw lots to see who shall tell the first tale, the Knight being asked to 'draw cut' first and, whether by 'aventure, or sort, or cas', the Knight draws the straw to tell the first tale. The pilgrims ride forward, and the Knight begins to tell his tale.

Prologue to the Canterbury Tales : Analysis

The General Prologue was probably written early in the composition of the Canterbury Tales, and offers an interesting comparison point to many of the individual tales itself. Of course, it does not match up to the tales as we have them in a number of ways: the Nun's Priest and the Second Nun are not described, and, most significantly, the work as we have it does not reflect the Host's plan. For starters, the pilgrimage only seems to go as far as Canterbury (for the Parson's Tale) and only the narrator tells two tales on the way there, with all the other pilgrims telling only a single tale (and some who are described in the General Prologue not telling a tale at all).

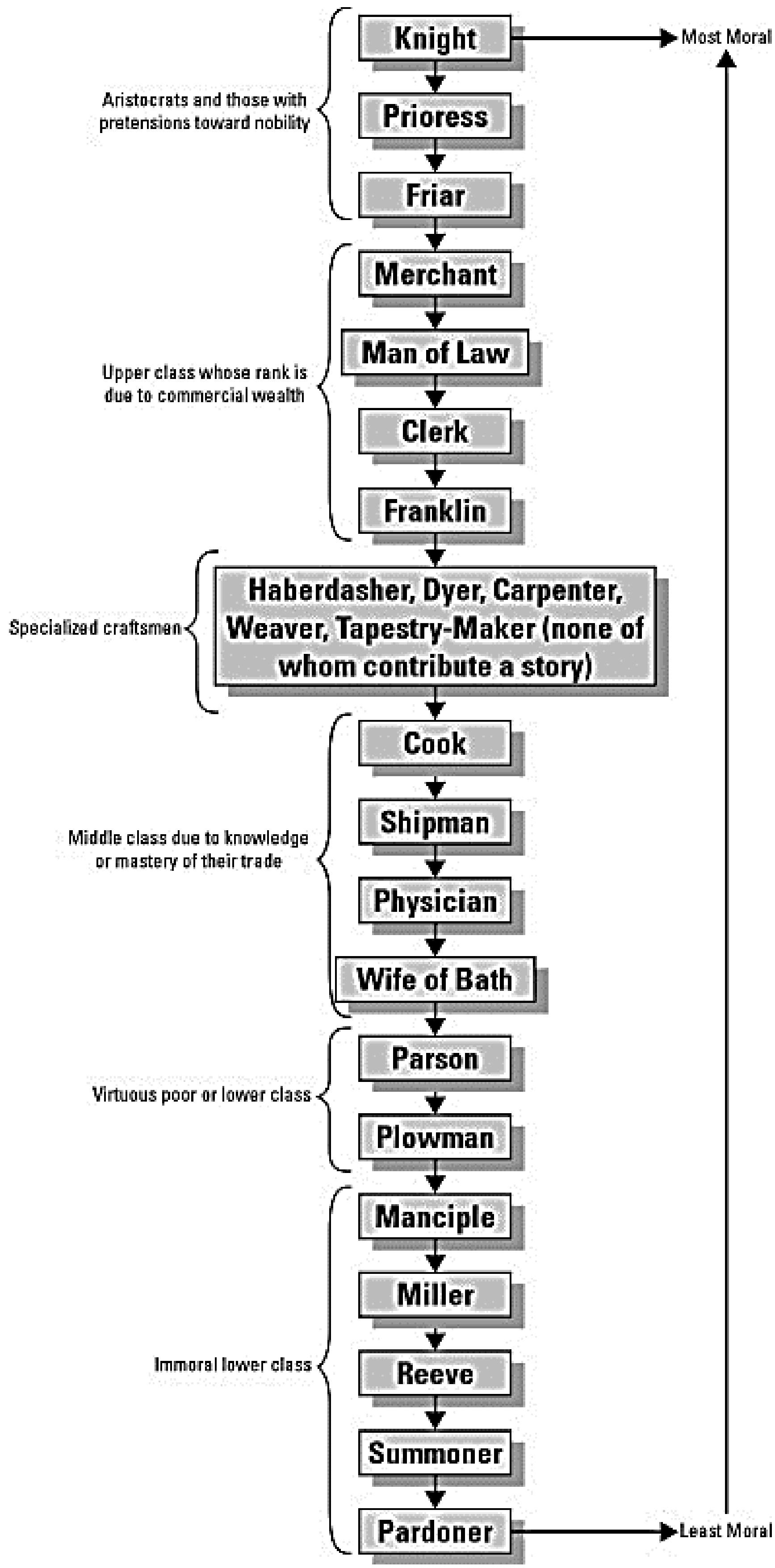
We must, therefore, view the General Prologue with some hesitation as a comparison point to the tales themselves: it offers useful or enlightening suggestions, but they are no means a complete, reliable guide to the tales and what they mean. What the General Prologue offers is a brief, often very visual description of each pilgrim, focusing on details of their background, as well as key details of their clothing, their food likes and dislikes, and their physical features. These descriptions fall within a common medieval tradition of portraits in words (which can be considered under the technical term ekphrasis), Chaucer's influence in this case most likely coming from The Romaunt de la Rose.

Immediately, our narrator insists that his pilgrims are to be described by 'degree'. By the fact that the Knight, the highest-ranking of the pilgrims, is selected as the first teller, we see the obvious social considerations of the tale. Still, all human life is here: characters of both sexes, and from walks of life from lordly knight, or godly parson down to oft-divorced wife or grimy cook.

Each pilgrim portrait within the prologue might be considered as an archetypal description. Many of the 'types' of characters featured would have been familiar stock characters to a medieval audience: the hypocritical friar, the rotund, food-loving monk, the rapacious miller are all familiar types from medieval estates satire (see Jill Mann's excellent book for more information). Larry D. Benson has pointed out the way in which the characters are paragons of their respective crafts or types - noting the number of times the words 'wel koude' and 'verray parfit' occur in describing characters.

Yet what is key about the information provided in the General Prologue about these characters, many of whom do appear to be archetypes, is that it is among the few pieces of objective information - that is, information spoken by our narrator that we are given throughout the Tales. The tales themselves (except for large passages of the prologues and epilogues) are largely told in the words of the tellers: as our narrator himself insists in the passage. The words stand for themselves: and we interpret them as if they come from the pilgrims' mouths. What this does - and this is a key thought for interpreting the tales as a whole - is to apparently strip them of writerly license, blurring the line between Chaucer and his characters.

Chaucer's voice, in re-telling the tales as accurately as he can, entirely disappears into that of his characters, and thus the Tales operates almost like a drama. Where do Chaucer's writerly and narratorial voices end, and his characters' voices begin? This self-vanishing quality is key to the Tales, and perhaps explains why there is one pilgrim who is not described at all so far, but who is certainly on the pilgrimage - and he is the most fascinating, and the most important by far: a poet and statesman by the name of Geoffrey Chaucer.


Knight
Most Moral
Aristocrats and those with pretensions toward nobility
Prioress
Friar
Merchant
Upper class whose rank is due to commercial wealth
Man of Law
Clerk
Franklin
Specialized craftsmen
Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter, Weaver, Tapestry-Maker (none of whom contribute a story)
Cook
Middle class due to knowledge or mastery of their trade
Shipman
Physician
Wife of Bath
Parson
Virtuous poor or lower class
Plowman
Manciple
Miller
Immoral lower class
Reeve
Summoner
Pardoner
Least Moral

Chaucer's Realism

Literature is the mirror of its age. Supreme literary artist is one who becomes a mouthpiece and provides a real picture of his age with its minute details. Chaucer is the true representative of his age. He portrayed a comprehensive picture of contemporary life. He realistically epitomizes the social, economic and religious conditions of his age. He was a keen observer of men and manners, and was endowed with the talent of imaginatively presenting contemporary society upon a great scale. He is in true sense a social chronicler of England. His poetry reflects the 14th century not in fragment but as a complete whole. He for the first time made poetry the medium for the expression of social reality. Various aspects of Chaucer's realism are elaborated below:

The Old and the New: Chaucer's age was transitional. It was medieval but beneath the medievalism—the desire for change was already at work. He saw the early rays of Renaissance. Ecclesiastical ideas and the medieval habits of mind were still the controlling elements in Chaucer's period. The K**night in the Prologue reflects the fading chivalry of the middle ages**. The old Knight was a brave warrior and was a true symbol of the fast vanishing old world of knighthood. The Knight is a fine expression of the medieval spirit.

The Squire, the Knight's son, represents **the new conception of chivalry**. He has the more luxurious and less idealistic temper of the age of the French wars. Like his father he does not dream of chivalry and war. He takes delight in the pleasures of life:

Well could he sit a horse and ride,
Make songs, joust and dance, draw and write.

The **Clerk of Oxford** represents the interest that people had started showing in **classical learning.** Chaucer was influenced by Boccaccio, Petrarch and Dante, the pioneers of Renaissance in Italy. He imbibed from them humanism which is clearly reflected in The Canterbury Tales. Chaucer was pioneer of Renaissance humanism in English literature. He was the Evening Star of the medieval day and the Morning Star of Renaissance.

Social Condition: Chaucer for the first time made poetry a powerful medium for the expression of contemporary social conditions and life. He had a wide experience of men of many ranks and conditions, and he had been storing up for years, with his keenly observant, quiet eyes, the materials for a literary presentation of contemporary society upon a great scale.

Chaucer exposes the **corruption in village life** in The Prologue. The village was a self-sufficient economic and social unit. The Reeve was mainly responsible for the organisation of village life. He used to be the elected representative of villagers. Some of the reeves were corrupt and exploited the people. The **Reeve in The Prologue took advantage of all his opportunities for cheating the lord of mansion**.

Chaucer was aware of the **rise of the new class of gentlemen farmers**. **The Franklin** who is quite well off **represents** this **new class**.

The Church and Religious Life: Chaucer does not attack like Wycliff or Lollard but he is content to expose the growing corruption, love of luxury and materialism, and laxity of discipline through his ecclesiastical figures. He realistically depicts the growing corruption of the church through his ecclesiastical characters. He draws the vivid portraits of the fat, pleasure-loving **Monk**, the merry and wanton **Friar,** the clever-rogue **Pardoner** who wanders about selling indulgences and relics, clearly show that he was alive to the shocking corruption that prevailed in the church of his times. The ecclesiastics are hangers on and caterpillars of the church. The **Friar** is intimate with hospitable franklins, inn-keepers and worthy women, and despises beggars and lazars. The Summoner is a repulsive man. Chaucer's Parson is the type of the true shepherds of the church. He is poor in this world's goods, but "rich in holy thought and work". The Parson's brother, a Plowman, travels with him. He is a **"true swinker and a good man**" who helps his poor neighbours without hire and loves them as himself.

Realistic Presentation of the Cross-Sections of Society: Chaucer realistically presented the varied sections of contemporary society. His men and women represent social realism. Chaucer's **Merchant** represents the new class of traders and merchants. The merchant is conscious of his importance. He delights in pomp and show:

A merchant was there with a forked beard,
In mottallee, and high on horse he sat.

The low classes also emerged as power group. They clamored for better conditions of life. Chaucer's carpenter, dyer, plowman etc. represent the new power these commoners were getting in those days. Each of them seemed important and their wives, too, were conscious of their growing importance in the national life. The growing prosperity of the new-rich class manifested itself in the love for display and extravagance. The, Knight, the Squire, the Wife of Bath and many other characters in The Prologue love display of pomp and show.

Chaucer's **Doctor of Physic** represents the **medieval medical profession**. He has little time to read Bible. He knows about herbal remedies and he is also well versed with astrology. Chaucer laughs at him for his fee loving propensities:

For gold in physick is a cordial
Therefore he loved gold in special.

The poor **Clerk of Oxford represents the passion of learning**. The Prioress, the Nun, and the Wife of Bath represent women of his time. Chaucer's characters represent almost the entire range of English society in the fourteenth century, with the exception of the highest aristocracy and the lowest order.

In short, Chaucer is a perfect representative of his age. He is in true sense a social chronicler of England. His poetry reflects the 14th century not in fragment but as a complete whole.

Chaucer’s Art of Characterization

Characterization is the concept of creating characters in a piece of literature. It can be said without any doubt that the worth of every writer is judged from the delineation of his characters. Geoffrey Chaucer stands above head and shoulder of all other English writers in art of Characterization. His characters breathe, walk and talk as we do and their wishes and aspirations, their likes and dislikes are quite akin to men of "flesh and blood". They are so universal in nature that we meet these characters daily in every society; therefore, they do not look unreal to us at all.

Chaucer's Prologue is a **picture-gallery**. His pilgrims are like twenty-nine pictures hung on a wall. These pilgrims are from different walks of life. They are so carefully chosen that they represent the whole of the English society and fully reveal social, moral, material, commercial, romantic and chivalric trends prevailing in the society. He presents each of them with minute details about their dresses, physical features, habits, peculiarities of manner, speech etc.

Chaucer follows the methods common to all **painters.** He paints with words and not with a brush. He had the seeing-eye, the retentive memory and the judgment to select rightly. Many of his characters are drawn from his own acquaintances. For example, the host Hairy Bailey is drawn from an actual host known to Chaucer. Similarly, the Wife of Bath, and the Oxford Clerk are also drawn from individuals with whom he came in contact in his life. That is way his characters are **life-like**. They are living and breathing human beings having the force of reality. His picture-gallery is made up real men and women.

In many respects, Chaucer shows a marked preference for brilliant colours, both in **dress and appearance**. On entering his picture-gallery, one is at once impressed by the remarkable brightness of his portraits. For example, the gown of the **Squire** is embroidered,

as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, wyite and reede;

Similarly, the **Friar** is dressed all in green and the hose of the **Wife of Bath** is of fine scarlet red. The face of the **Summoner** is fiery red and the **Miller** has a reddish beard. The atmosphere of Chaucer's portrait-gallery is sunlit, bright and colourful.

In the portraits of the Prologue Chaucer excels the art of the painter. He has an advantage over the painter. He can make use of sounds which the artist with the brush cannot do. He hears the jingling of the bells of the Monk's palfrey, notes the nasal tones of the Prioress, and the lisping of the Friar.

He highlights one set of character by presenting it as **foil to another**. The refined and delicate **Prioress** is contrasted with the coarse and broad-speaking **Wife of Bath**. His ecclesiastical characters represent the degeneration of the church and the corruption that had overtaken the clergy of the times. His **Monk**, the **Friar**, the **Pardoner** and the **Summoner** have all forgotten their duties. They have grown greedy and selfish and are given to all sorts of corrupt practices. They have been **individualized by noting their personal peculiarities and oddities**. For example, the Monk has been individualized by his eyes.

His eyen stepe and rollynge in his heed,
That seemed as a forneys of a leed;

Chaucer **uses apt similes and metaphors to present his characters**. His similes are always drawn from common, familiar and homely aspects of life and nature. His pictorial imagination constantly uses such imagery. He makes his characters gleam and glow as on a canvas. For example, the merry nature of the Squire is described in a single line by, saying that **"he was as bright as is the month of May**." The brightness of the Friar's eyes is his most peculiar feature and it is emphasized through an equally apt image:

His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght,
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.

Chaucer portrays his characters **objectively and impartially**. He is so broadminded that he shows his equal sympathy to all the characters, the just and the unjust, the pious and the sinner.

Chaucer's characters are **types as well as individuals**: they are the symbols of some particular class, age group, or profession, but they also have their own peculiar traits, their own idiosyncrasies, their own ways of talking and doing things. Each of the twenty-nine pilgrims in the Prologue is morally and socially representative, but he is also an individual with marked peculiarities of his own. For example, his Knight is a typical Knight of his age representing the fast fading chivalry of the middle ages. But he is also an individual who, for his personal qualities, had been honoured in foreign lands above all other knights and who had been the guest of honour at many a feast. His son, the young Squire, represents the jollity of youth as well as the spirit of the rising chivalry of the times. He is not, like his father, interested so much in war and adventure as in singing and dancing and Jove-making. He is also an individual, who has a fondness for bright colours and fine apparel,

Embrouded was he,as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, wyite and reede;

Another worth mentioning about Chaucer's characterization is that he' has the gift of seeing the **universal** in the particular and he presents both these aspects of life in the picture of pilgrims. These pilgrims possess all those traits, humours and habits that characterize the men and women of all ages and nations in this world. They are not, of an age but of all ages, **"They are timeless, creations on a time determined stage."** The Squire, the Monk, the Prioress, the Franklin, the Wife of Bath etc., may have changed their names, the title by which they are known, but they are all human beings having the same passions, desires and instincts as are common to humanity. All of us feel at home in their company, for we all recognize in them an element of our own selves.

His characters are **not static**: they constantly grow and develop like real men and women. They talk to each other, narrate their own tales, and comment on the tales told by others. They reveal a hundred aspects of their natures. They are shown to us as moving, acting, talking and disputing just like men of flesh and blood. In short, it can be said that there is nothing of the dreamer about Chaucer-nothing of the stern moralist

and social reformer. Like Shakespeare, he makes it his business in The Canterbury Tales, to paint life as he sees it, and leaves other to draw the moral.

Modernity in Chaucer

Chaucer is regarded as the earliest of the great modernism. In those dark days when light of modernism was not visible on the horizon, Chaucer anticipated the modern taste and the modern mind and in his poetry, he introduced qualities of advanced age. Though Chaucer has not written a drama or a novel as we know it, yet his works contain the seed of modern drama and novel. If he had lived a few years, he would certainly have been our first dramatist and novelist, just as we know he is the first true national poet of England.

When we make a careful and critical analysis of Chaucer's poetry, we arrive at a definite conclusion that sympathy, realism, intelligence, straight forwardness, humor, irony, satire and keen observation are salient features of Chaucer's literary works. He enchants the reader by his lovely diction, his description and narrative power and the graceful movement of his verse. He is the founder. of pure pimple and musical style of writing verses, which was later on followed by Spencer, Shakespeare and Milton.

Firstly Chaucer is rightly regarded as **the father of English poetry**. He may also be described as the first modern writer in English. He Made a considerable contribution to the development of English prosody and versification, as well as to the development of various poetic forms. He is great delineator of character as well of manners and customs'. The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is a valuable social document. Chaucer is also a great story teller, as well as a prominent houmorist. His role in the development of English Language was also a significant one. He enabled English language to replace Latin and French as the medium of ambitious literature.

Secondly, his poetry **links with the poetry of his predecessors**. Here and there we have in Chaucer's poetry words and phrases from earlier poets, as well as rhyme-tags and other items in the stock-in-trade of medieval poets. Some examples of this are words and phrases like 'rose-red', `silver'bright', 'grey as glass', 'still as a stone', 'brown as a berry', etc. However, the most characteristic part of Chaucer's poetry is that here such borrowing is the minimum. Poetry before Chaucer, and to a certain extent even after Chaucer, was alliterative in nature. Chaucer's poetry is accentual and not alliterative, though we now and then have alliterative phrases in his poetry which reflect the alliterative conception of poetry. However, in many cases, his alliterative phrases occur even in modern speech and writing, such as "fish and flesh", "busy as bees", "friend or foe", "sigh and. sob", "weary or wet". etc Chaucer also used many stock phrases, but they only help to accentuate the conversational quality of his poetry. Some 'examples of this type are "No more of this", "ride and go", "Old and .young", "more and less", "weep and cry", "as old bokes seyn" (as old books say), "deep and wide", etc.

Thirdly, Chaucer attempted the new **realistic** task of portraying men and women as they were and to describe them so that the readers could recognize them as their own acquaintances. His characters have for this reason become a permanent treasure of English literature. Beowulf and Roland are ideal heroes, essentially figures of the fancy, but the merry Host of the Tabard Inn, Madam Eglantine, the fat .Monk, the good Parson,

the kindhearted Plowman, the studious Oxford Clerk, these strike us more like personal acquaintances than characters in a story. "Chaucer is the first English writer to bring the atmosphere of romantic interest about the men and women and the daily work of one's Own world which is the aim of nearly all modern literature."

Fourthly, With Chaucer, the English language and English literature grew at a bound to **full maturity**. No Other Middle English writer has his skill, his range, his complexity, his large human outlook. Unfortunately, the English language was still in the process of rapid change, and major shifts in pronunciation and accentuation were to occur in the following century and a half. This meant that Chaucer's achievement in establishing English as a fully developed literary language could not be adequately exploited by his immediate successors. It was not long before readers were unable to scan him -properly. This fact helps to emphasizes Chancer's loneliness. His followers lack both his technical brilliance and his breadth of vision, leaving him the one undisputed master in medieval English literature. Not until Shakespeare is there an English writer with Chaucer's combination of technique and insight and his ability to put each at the service of the other, and Shakespeare's genius, which was the greater, ran in different channels.

His Trend of Borrowing Material :- Chaucer takes the material for his poems wherever he can find it. He borrows profusely form Latin, French, and Italian literature. But whatever he borrows, he makes entirely his own. His originality consists in giving an old story some present human interest, making it express the life and ideals of his own age. In this respect The Knight's Tale is noteworthy. Its names belong to an ancient civilization, but its characters are men and women of the English nobility as Chaucer knew them. This is perhaps his finest work as a narrative poet. It is heroic in subject, chivalrous in sentiment, and romantic in tone. Nominally, it is a tale of the heroic age of Greece, hut everything in it is medievalised. It may be regarded as an idealised picture of the Middle Ages. Its account of the, tournament, its presentation of the principles of knightly ethics, and its vivid portrayal of the chivalrous conception of love give it a distinctly medieval flavour.

Conclusion: - Chaucer is regarded as the first English short story teller and the first English modern poet. Popular literature till Chaucer's time had been occupied mainly with the gods and heroes of modern era. Chaucer was

The morning star of song, who made
His music heard below,
Don Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

He was the

Father of verse, who in immortal song
First taught the Muse to speak the English tongue.

Geoffrey Chaucer: A Representative of His Age

Well does Compton Rickett observe: "Chaucer symbolizes, as no other writer does, the Middle Ages. He stands in much the same relation to the life of his time as Pope does to the earlier phases to the Eighteenth century; and Tennyson to the Victorian era; and his place in English literature is even more important than theirs..."

The social groups of thirty pilgrims cover the entire range of fourteenth century English society, leaving only royalty on one hand, and the lowest on the other.

Medieval Chivalry: - Chaucer's knight is a true representative of the spirit of the medieval chivalry which was a blend of love, religion, and bravery. He has been a champion of not fewer than fifteen battles in the defense of Christianity. Being the embodiment of chivalric ideals, Chaucer's knight observes utmost courtesy. He was not only worthy in politeness but also wise in decisiveness.

We must, however, point out that the spirit of true chivalry was breathing its last in the age of Chaucer. The Knight, in fact, is a representative of an order which was losing its ground. The true representative of the new order is his young son. The Squire, who has as much a taste for revelry as for chivalry. He is a lover and a lusty bachelor.

So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He slept namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale

Trade, Commerce and Art: - The Merchant is a typical representative of his class. The countrymen and merchants have always made the two most common objects of humour and satire. But Chaucer lets the Merchant go without much of satire, perhaps in recognition of the importance that his class had gained in his age.

Medicine: - The knowledge of Astronomy rather Astrology was a must for a physician as all the physical ailments were supposed to be the consequences of the peculiar configuration of the stars and planets. That is why the Doctor of Physic, too, was grounded in Astronomy. Chaucer has a sly dig at the Doctor in his reference to his gold-loving nature.

The Church: - The Church had become a hotbed of profligacy, corruption and rank materialism. The Monk is a fat, sprouting fellow averse to study and penance. The Friar is a jolly beggar who employs his tongue to carve out his living. The Prioress bothers more about modish etiquettes than austerity. The Pardoner is a despicable parasite in trading in letters of pardon with the sinners who could ensure a seat in heaven by paying hard cash. The summoner is likewise a depraved fellow.

The only exception is the poor Parson apparently a follower of Wycliffe who revolted against the corruption of the Church.

The New Learning: - The Clerk of Oxford represents the new intellectual culture. He is an austere scholar who prefers twenty books of Aristotle's philosophy to gay clothes and musical instruments. And

Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede
Noght a word spak he moore than was neede

Thus, The Prologue is a comprehensive representation of the fourteenth century society which consisted of three main classes-that of the knights representing medieval chivalry, that of the clergy representing the Church, and that of the workers. These three classes constituted the main social structure and we can reconstruct the life of the fourteenth century through it.

Chaucer's Treatment of women

Literature reflects the tendencies of the age in which it is produced and there is always a supreme literary artist who becomes the mouth piece of his age and gives expression to the hopes and aspirations, its fades, and fetishes, its tears and doubts, its prosperity and enterprise in his work. Chaucer, too, represents his age and holds mirror up to the life of his time. His poetry represents the fourteenth century and not only one limited aspect of it. For example, the unknown author of "Pearls" shows the mysticism of refined mind. Wycliff, points out the surging wave of religious reformation, Gower shows the fear produced in the wealthier class by the Peasant Rising and Langland, presents corruption in the church and the religious order. Each of these authors throws light on only one aspect of life of fourteenth century. It is Chaucer's greatness that he directs his comprehensive gaze not on one aspect of his time, but on all its wide and vanegated life. He is a wide and capacious soul and takes a fuller view of his times more than anyone else could have taken in those days. Chaucer takes into consideration the chivalry, trade, medical profession, clergymen and women of the fourteenth century.

Chaucer's attitude towards women is impartial, unprejudiced, realistic and comprehensive. According to Chaucer, a woman is neither a goddess nor necessarily an evil. She is just a companion of man and as there are gods and devils among men, so there are goddesses and witches among women. Chaucer's realistic approach towards life never allows him to go to extremes. For instance, the Franklin's opinion about women reflects the whole story. According to his tale, the real question is not of mastery, but of mutual adjustment and co-operation.

In Chaucer's age, there were two views with regard to women. According to the opinion of the church, woman in the person of Eve was the cause of fall of Adam. It was she who had brought sin and death into the world. On the other hand, quite contrary to this view the poets held positive opinion about them. According to poets, she was a goddess who descended from Heaven with pomp and majesty and filled the world with a unique glow. Women in Chaucer's England did not enjoy an enviable social position. Women of lower class of society, in particular were doomed to a life of unrelieved drudgery. They were treated as slaves or serfs. Women belonging to the upper classes, however, led a comparatively better social life and they received some education and wore the fine clothes and ornaments.

In "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales", Chaucer tells that there are two kinds of woman in the world in all ages. He tells this by depicting two women, The Prioress and The Wife of Bath. The Prioress is the embodiment of sweetness, beauty, grace and good manners whereas The Wife of Bath is a combination of ugly features and shrewish

qualities. Both of them are present in all ages. Sometimes, The Prioress predominates and sometimes The Wife of Bath.

In Chaucer's time, a woman was regarded as inferior to man. A woman who attempted governance was very often beaten by her husband. A woman's welfare lays in accepting the mastery of her husband. We are told that fifth husband of The Wife of Bath tried to assert his male superiority over her and once struck her about her ear so violently that she became deaf. Thus, women like The Wife of Bath always manage to escape from the life, a humdrum love, gossip, finery, company of men and never like to stay at home with their husbands. Chaucer explains the nature of such women in the following lines of the Wife's portrait.

In felawshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she koude of that art the oIde daunce.

The Prioress represents the conventional woman with all those vanities dear to feminine heart. In "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales", her description includes her physical appearance, table manners, affected speech and tender sentimentality. Her name is "Madame Eglentyne". One wonders what this wild flower has to do in the convent. She wears fine clothes and on her brooch is inscribed the motto "Amor Vincit Omnia" (Love conquers all).

The Wife of Bath has expounded her views on women, marriage and love at a great length in the Prologue. She tells the company that she has no faith in virginity. God has given them bodies to use. Let saints be continent. God never forbade marriage, nor did He command virginity. The Clerk replies to the Wife's heresies by telling the story of Griselda. She was a retort to the Wife's heretical doctrine.

Chaucer's "Tale of Melibeus" poses the problem of mastery in domestic life and suggests that husband should accept the mastery of his wife. The Nun's Priest's tale puts the opposite view. Similarly, different pilgrims express their views in their tales. However, the Franklin's tale gives a balanced view. According to this tale, the real question is not of mastery but mutual adjustment and co-operation. The real bliss of wedded life can be enjoyed through mutual co-operation, forbearance and patience; this is the view of Chaucer himself.

Humour in the Prologue

Humour is the tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement. Humour is the sympathetic appreciation of the comic and enables us to love while we laugh. Humour enables us to see the person's point of view, to distinguish between crimes and misdemeanours. There is no sting in humour, no consciousness superiority. On the contrary, it contains an element of tenderness. Satire, being destructive, not constructive, is in a class apart, but even satire may become so softened by humour as it does in Chaucer that it may lose the element of caricature and serve only to give a keener edge to wit.

Chaucer's whole point of view is that of the humorist. He is a comic poet who walks carelessly through life pausing the notice every trifle as he passes. He views the world as the unaccustomed traveller views a foreign country. He possesses the faculty of amused observation in a pre-eminent degree. Again and again he contrives to invest some perfectly trifling and commonplace incident with an air of whimsicality, and by so doing to make it at once realistic and remote.

Chaucer's humour is essentially English. It is born of a strong common-sense and a generous sympathy; and there are the qualities of the greatest English humorists like Shakespeare and Fielding.

Chaucer's humour has been acknowledged as always **sympathetic**. In the Prologue, except in his handling of the Monk and the Friar there is **no sting** in it. Chaucer does not treat with disdain those whose foolishness he has fathomed, nor does he turn away in disgust from the rascal whose tricks he has detected. If humour can be defined as "the sympathetic appreciation of the comic", i.e. the faculty which enables us to laugh—but to laugh affectionately and sympathetically, then Chaucer was indeed a great humorist. In his description of the Wife of Bath, he reminds us of Shakespeare's treatment of Sir Toby in Twelfth Night and of Falstaff in Henry IV. In fact, Chaucer makes us appreciate a character even when laughing at it. Moreover, Chaucer invariably makes more fun of the individual than of the institution to which he belongs. Mockery either discreet or uproarious never withered in him the gift of poetry.

Chaucer's humour **springs from the rich fields of character**. He derives pleasure from the "quaintness of individuality". By his keen observation and insight he detects incongruities in men and women and presents before his readers in an amusing manner. Some of the facts are quite trivial in themselves but become amusing in the way Chaucer tells them e.g. the Squire's locks which look as if they were laid in press, the hat of the Wife of Bath weighing 19 lbs., the Reeve's thin legs, the Franklin's weakness for sharp sauce, etc.

Chaucer's humour is his distinct quality. He says that in the literature of his time, when so few poets seem to have any perception of the fun in life, the humour of Chaucer is **invigorating and delightful**. There is great variety in his humour. It is kindly and **patronising** as in the case of the Clerk of Oxford, broad and **semi-farcical** as in the Wife of Bath; **pointedly satirical** as in the Pordoner and the Summoner; or **coarse**, as happens in the Tales of the Miller, the Reeve and the Pordoner. Chaucer’s humour is not a pure fun. It is seldom that the satirical intent is wholly lacking, as it is in the case of the Good Parson, but, except in rare cases, the satire is good-humoured and well-meant.

Chaucer's humour in the Prologue d**erives from the fact that he is himself one of the pilgrims**, one of the original twenty-nine. He is both actor and spectator and both he and his audience enjoy the antics which this clever arrangement enables him to perform. As pilgrim-narrator, he often discloses to his readers something about a character which none of the other pilgrims could possibly know, but which adds something important to our impression of the person concerned. For example he reveals to the delight of the readers that the Merchant was in debt and the Prioress sang the divine service intoning through the nose while she would not like to do so outside her convent.

Chaucer's humour in the Prologue is also **due to his unconventional descriptive style**. He deliberately departs from the artificial, lifeless forms of traditional portraiture and addresses himself to strikingly realistic or lifelike portrayals which by their very realism of speech and idiom make the incident or the object delightful.

Chaucer's witty comments upon the pilgrims such as "This Manciple sette his aller cappe" or his lavish praise upon some knave such as The Shipman or his pun on some word such as Philosophere in the sense of true 'philosopher' and 'alchemist' are also conducive to a good deal of humour. About the Oxford Clerk Chaucer says:

But al be that he was a philosophere,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre.

Not least among the manifestations of Chaucer's humour is the **quality of exaggeration**. The merry Friar with his twinkling eyes is the best beggar in his friary ; the Franklin has not his equal; in all the world there was none like the Doctor of Physic; the Shipman had no peer from 'Hulle to Cartage'; and in cloth-making the Wife of Bath excelled even the matchless weavers of Ypres and Ghent.

To conclude, Chaucer's humour is one of the greatest assets of his poetic art. As Compton-Rickett says, indeed for all his considerable power, pathos, his happy fancy, his lucid imagination, it is as a great humorist that he lingers longest in our memories, with humour, rich, profound and sane, devoid of spite and cynicism, irradiated by a genial kindliness and a consummate knowledge of human nature.

Chaucer as the Father of English Poetry

Chaucer has rightly been called "the father of English poetry". He founded English language and poetry alike. Alber calls him "the earliest of the great moderns" because he imparted modernity to English language and poetry, and "it is through him that its free secular spirit first expresses itself in our poetry". Matthew Arnold was right in asserting that "with him is born our real poetry". He was rightly recognised during the Renaissance as the Father of English poetry:

Father of verse ! who in immortal song
First taught the muse to speak the English tongue.

New Poetic Subject: As regards Chaucer's poetic material he unhesitantly took what suited him. He sometimes borrowed wholesale without change, and often adapted and reshaped his matter freely. Moody and Lovett write in this connection: "But what is more important is that Chaucer improved whatever he borrowed, and stamped it with his individuality of thought and style and structural skill. That part of his work we value most, however, such as the prologues to the Legend of Good Women and to The Canterbury Tales, was original in every sense, and some of the Tales have been so radically and vitally remodelled that they stand as genuinely original." Besides striking the note of originality, Chaucer turned his eyes to the life and people of his time. His realism reflects his modernity.

Humour and Pathos: Chaucer is the first genuine humorist in English poetry. Stopford A. Brooke writes: "Sometimes his humour is broad, sometimes shy, sometimes gay, but it is also exquisite and affectionate. His pathos does not go into the far depths of sorrow and pain, but it is always natural. He can bring tears into our eyes, and he can make us smile or be sad as he pleases."

Chaucer's Language and Versification: Chaucer is the first national poet of England, for he gave to the people a language, so reformed and reshaped, as to be a potent instrument for the expression of national life and thought. During Chaucer's time there was no standard form of English. There were four dialects — Southern, East Midland, Northumbrian and Kentish. Chaucer popularised the East Midland dialect by giving it a new form and shape. Chaucer made it the standard for future writers and the model of current modern English. He imparted to it smoothness, suppleness and simplicity and breathed into it a high poetic life. Chaucer wrote his memorable work The Canterbury Tales in the reshaped and reformed East Midland dialect. Lowes rightly remarks: "He found English a dialect and left it a language." Spenser called him "the well of English undefiled".

Chaucer imparted musical sweetness and liquidity to language. Stopford A. Brooke remarks: "His eye for colour was superb and distinctive. He had a very fine ear for the music of verse, and the tale and the verse go together like voice and music. Indeed, so softly flowing and bright are they, that to read them is like listening in a meadow full of sunshine to a clear stream riffling over its bed of pebbles."

Chaucer's style is noticeable for vigour, clarity and concreteness. His images are conspicuous for "uncomplicated naturalness". They are taken from the familiar areas of common experience; for example, the Monk's horse is "as broun as is a berie", the Friar's eyes twinkle "as doon the sterres in the frosty night", the Franklin's purse is as white as morning milk, and the threadbare Clerk's mount is "bene as is a rake". Chaucer uses'simple and direct adjectives to describe his pilgrims, for example: worthy, gay, bright, fair, fresh, perfect, sharp, wise etc. His descriptions are graphic and startling. The description of the Wife of Bath creates a graphic effect:

Booled was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

Albert writes: "Chaucer's best descriptions of men, manners and places, as when giving details of conventional spring mornings and flowery gardens, have a vivacity that makes his poetry unique."

Instead of using courtly and elegant style Chaucer preferred the simple and racy vocabulary of colloquial English. James Winny writes: "In its racy turn of phrase and pithy commentary, the style of the General Prologue is close to the terse, pungent manner of the proverbial sayings which are scattered plentifully through his work. ...... By using this direct and richly vernacular style Chaucer is able to secure an effect of sensational reality, in which material objects take on a heightened power, as though seen with the intensity of imaginative insight."

Chaucer is the first man to use "naked words" in English; "the first to make our composite language a thing compact and vital". Stopford A. Brooke points out that he wrote The Canterbury Tales in "almost the English of our time. Chaucer made our tongue

into a true means of poetry. He did more, he welded together the French and English elements in our language and made them into one English tool for the use of literature, and all our prose writers and poets derive their tongue from the language of The Canterbury Tales."

As a poetic artist, Chaucer is superb. In this respect he stands apart from other poets of his age. Gower wrote with a set object, and nothing can be less beautiful than the form in which he puts his tales. The author of Piers Plowman wrote with the object of reform of social and ecclesiastical affairs, and his form is harsh and uncouth. Chaucer wrote because he was full of emotion and joy in his own thoughts, and he did his best to arouse the same feelings and thoughts in the heart of his readers. He does not moralise. He does not reform. He is a pure poet. He, then, has the best right to the poet's name. He is, within his own range, the clearest of English artists.

As a versifier Chaucer is unique in contemporary poetry. He struck a modern note in versification because he discarded altogether the Old English irregular lines and alliteration—rim, ram, roff. He deftly adopted the French method of regular metre and end rimes. He introduced the heroic couplet into English verse and invented the rhyme royal.

Chaucer's Narrative Art or Chaucer as the Father of English Novel: Chaucer is a matchless narrator in verse. He is "often called the father of English poetry, it would be perhaps less flattering, but certainly true, to call him the father of English novel." His Troilus and Cressyde is the first English novel in everything except that it is written in verse. It is a love story and it contains all the elements of a modern novel. It has plot, dialogue, humour, irony, realism, conflict, dramatic element etc. In it Chaucer naturally told a story with delicacy, humour and psychological insight. The character of Cressyde is the first true psychological study of a complex woman and Pandarus is the first great comic character in English. S. D. Neil remarks: "Had Chaucer written in prose, it is possible that his Troilus and Cressyde and not Richardson's Pamela would be celebrated as the first English novel."

The Canterbury Tales is the best exposition of the spirit of novel. Almost all the tales are novels in miniature. What makes these tales novels in miniature is their realistic description of contemporary life and manners, singleness of plot, vivid characterisation with psychological insight, subtle sense of humour and dramatic element. In the words of W. J. Long, Chaucer's Tales "are stories as well as poems, and Chaucer is to be regarded as our first story-teller as well as our first modern poet."

Chaucer's method of narration is dramatic Action and dramatic vitality are the keynotes of his tales. Action, dialogue, gesture and costume are all there as in real life. Prologue "is the first act in the drama and gives us the dramatis personae of that "comedy which is not intended for the stage." F. N. Robinson comments on dramatic element in the Tales: "In fact, from one point of view, the pilgrimage is a continuous and lively drama, in which the stories themselves contribute to the action. Because of this sustained dramatic interest and the vivid reality of characters, as well as for the inclusive representation of English society, The Canterbury Tales has been called a Human Comedy. The implied comparison with Balzac's great series of stories of the life of modern France is not inappropriate."

Chaucer, as we have seen, created English language which became the future medium of English novel. Church says: "It is important to remember that from this fountainhead (Chaucer) there trickled, as a side-stream, the new medium of prose which was to become the appropriate vehicle for the novel proper." Chaucer anticipated the novel in the real sense. G. K. Chesterton humorously remarked: "If Chaucer is the father of English poetry, he is the grandfather of English fiction."

Chaucer's Contribution to English Language and Literature

Father of verse! who m immortal song
First taught the Muse to speak the English tongue

Chaucer was in many respects a pioneer, the first realist, the first humorist, the first narrative artist the first great character-painter, and the first great metrical artist in English literature. Further, he has been credited not only with the "fatherhood" of English poetry but has also been hailed as the father of English drama before the drama was born, and the father of English novel before the novel was born.. He is not only the first English poet, but a great poet in his own right.

Contribution to Language: - Chaucer found his English a dialect and left it a language. Chaucer found the English language brick and left it marble. When he started his literary career, the English speech, and still less, the English of writing was confusingly fluid and unsettled. The English language was divided into a number of dialects which were employed in different parts of the country. The four of them vastly more prominent than the others were: The Southern, The Midland, The Northern or Northumbrian and The Kentish.

Out of these four, the **Midland dialect**, which was spoken in London and its surrounding area, was the simplest in grammar and syntax. Moreover, it was the one patronised by the aristocratic and literary circles of the country. Chaucer employed in his work the East midland dialect, and by casting the enormous weight of his genius balance decided once for all which dialect was going to be the standard literary language of the whole of the country for all times to come. It is certain that if Chaucer had adopted some other dialect the emergence of the standard language of literature would have been considerably delayed. All the great writers of England succeeding Chaucer are masters of the language of which Chaucer is, before them, the great master.

Not only was Chaucer's selection of one dialect out of the four a happy one, but so was his selection of one of the three languages which were reigning supreme in England at that time-Latin, French, and English. In fact Latin and French were more fashionable than the poor "vernacular" English. Latin was considered "the universal language" and was patronised at the expense of English by the Church as well as the learned. French was the language of the court and was used for keeping the accounts of the royal household till as late as 1365. Chaucer **chose English** which was a despised language, and as the legendary king did to the beggar maid, raised her from the dust, draped her in royal robes, and conducted her coronation. That queen is ruling even now.

Contribution to Versification: - Chaucer's contribution to English versification is no less striking than to the English language. He sounded the death-knell of the Saxon alliterative measure and firmly established the modern one.

Chaucer may be designated as the father of modern English versification. In The Canterbury Tales he mostly uses lines of ten syllables each (with generally five accents); and the lines run into couplets; that is, each couple of lines has its end-syllables rhyming with each other. For example:

His eyes twinkled in his heed aright
As doon the sterres in the frosty night.

Not only this, Chaucer seems to be the first Englishman who realised and brought out the latent music of his language. "To read Chaucer's verse is like listening to a clear stream, in a meadow full of sunshine, rippling over its bed of pebbles." The following is the tribute of a worthy successor of his:

The morning star of song, who made
His music heard below,
Don Chaucer, the first -warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts thatfiU",
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still

He made English a pliant and vigorous medium of poetic utterance. His astonishingly easy mastery of the language is indeed remarkable. With one step the writings of Chaucer carry us into a new era in which the language appears endowed with ease, dignity, and copiousness of expression and clothed in the hues of the imagination.

The Content of Poetry: - Chaucer was a pioneer in the poetic field also. Not only the form of poetry, but its content, too, is highly indebted to him. He not only gave English poetry a new dress, but also a new body and a new soul. His major contribution towards the content of poetry is in his **strict adherence to realism**. His Prologue to the Canterbury Tales embodies a new effort in the history of literature, as it strictly deals with real men, manners, and life. The Prologue holds a mirror to the life of Chaucer's age and shows its manners and morals completely. He effectively replaces the shadowy delineations of the old romantic and allegorical school with the vivid and pulsating pictures of contemporary life.

Chaucer does not forget the **universal beneath the particular**, the dateless beneath the dated. The portraits of the pilgrims in the Prologue constitute not only an epitome of the society of fourteenth-century England, but the epitome of human nature in all climes and all ages. They are all with us today, though some of them have changed their names. The knight now commands a line regiment, the squire is in the guards, the shipman was a rum-runner while prohibition lasted and is active now in the black market and so on.

His Geniality, Tolerance, Humour, and Freshness: - Chaucer's tone as a poet is wonderfully instinct with geniality, tolerance, humour, and freshness. In spite of his awareness of the corruption and unrest in the society of his age Chaucer is never upset

or upsetting. No one can read Chaucer without feeling that it is good to be alive in this world however imperfect may it be in numerous respects. He is a chronic optimist. He is never harsh, rancorous, bitter, or indignant, and never falls out with his fellow men for their failings. The great English humorists like Shakespeare and Fielding share with Chaucer the same broad human sympathy which he first introduced into literature

Contribution to the Novel: - The novel is one of the latest courses in the banquet of English literature. But in his narrative skill, his gift of vivid characterization, his aptitude for plot-construction and his inventive skill Chaucer appears as a worthy precursor of the race of novelists who come centuries afterwards. His Tales are replete with intense human interest, and though he borrows his materials from numerous sundry sources, his narrative skill is all his own. His narration is lively and direct, if we make exception for the numerous digressions and philosophical and pseudo-philosophical animadversions having little to do with the tales proper, introduced after the contemporary fashion. It is difficult to find him flagging or growing dull and monotonous.

Chaucer's Prologue to The Canterbury Tales has been rightly called "the prologue to modern fiction." It has characters if not plot, and vivid characterization is one of the primary jobs of a novelist. According to Meredith "A novel should be a summary of actual life." So is, indeed, the Prologue. Several of the tales, too, are novels in miniature and hold the attention of the reader from the beginning to the end.

Contribution to the Drama: - Chaucer wrote at a time when secular drama had not been born. His works have some dramatic elements which are altogether missing in the poetry before him. His mode of characterisation in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales is, no doubt, static or descriptive, but in the tales proper it is dynamic or dramatic. There the characters reveal themselves, without the intervention of the author, through what they say and what they do. Even the tales they narrate, in most cases, are in keeping with their respective characters, avocations, temperaments, etc. If the drama had been known in Chaucer's time as a branch of living literature, he might have attained as high an excellence in comedy as any English or Continental writer.

We can conclude the discussion with the words of David Daiches, 'With Chaucer the English language and English literature grew at a bound to full maturity. No other Middle English writer has his skill, his range, his complexity, his large humane outlook. His followers lack both his technical brilliance and his breadth of vision, leaving him the one undisputed master in Medieval English Literature'. Well said:

The morning star of song who made,
His music heard below,
Don Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath,
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill,
The spacious times of Great Elizabeth,
With sounds that echo still

Ecclesiastical Characters in the Prologue

In spite of the fact that in Chaucer's age, religion had a control over the personalities and soul of the individuals, yet lamentably, its impact was degenerate. The cloisters

were advertising debasement, misusing the blameless people and were gaining cash under the cover of religion. Moralities and morals were blurring. The ministers had gotten famous for their covetousness, defilement and deceitfulness. They had overlooked their consecrated obligations and had gotten declined.

Of the thirty-one pilgrims of the Canterbury Tales, twelve were attached to religion in some way or other, and the manner in which Chaucer depicts them gives us some idea of the slack condition of many Church officials at the time and the poor opinion which the average man of education had of them. The bishops of the day were mainly shrewd men of business, quite respectable and hardworking; all of them English, owing their position to the joint efforts of King and Pope, but their energies were often devoted to public affairs rather than to the interests of their bishoprics. This was no new thing, but Wycliffe spoke and wrote fiercely against the corrupt clergy.

William Langland and John Wycliffe, as well as Chaucer, derided the practices of summoners, pardoners, and friar confessors, who were persecuting blackmailers protected by the law courts. How Chaucer exposes the corrupt clergy we can see it in his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.

The **Prioress** is the first ecclesiastical figure in "The Prologue". She smiles amiably and sings in her nasal tone. Chaucer says ironically that she is aware of the manners of the society and knows how to carry morsel to her mouth. He says:

Wel koude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hir brest.

She wears fashionable dress with a golden broach, engraved with the words: **"Amor Vincit Omnia" i.e. "Love conquers everything".**

She truly signifies high-class religious-minded ladies of the 14th century. She is not an ideal Nun and typifies the traits of the contemporary prioress.

The **Monk** is a pleasure-loving fellow. **An outridere, that lovede venerie,**

He is fat like a lord, for he leads a relaxed life and passes his time in eating, drinking and merry-making. He is entirely misfit to his profession. He is fond of fine dresses. He wears fur-lined sleeves, gold pins and love-knot. **A love knot in the gretter end there was**

He does not like to study the strict rules and discipline of the cloister. He likes hunting and has fine horses and hounds in his stable.

The **Friar** is a wanton, greedy and corrupt fellow who neglects his duties and does not bother about religion. He is fond of singing, merry-making, drinking and visiting inns and public places. He builds relations with the rich Franklin and worthy women. He is a rogue, seducer of women and scoundrel. He encourages sins by setting an easy solution of apology, misuses his authority and exploits others in terms of their sin. He was also very expert in the art of begging.

For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his In principio

Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente

The **Summoner** is a nasty figure. Children are afraid of him. **Of his visage children were aferd.**

He loves garlic, red wine and onion. He is a hypocrite who allows people to carry on their sins and forgives them for a small donation to him. He knows the secret of young women and men and exploits them to his own interest.

The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.

The **Pardoner** is a thorough cheat. His bag is full of relics which he sells to housewives and earns a lot.

He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.

He deceives the simple folk. He sings merrily, sweetly and attracts the people in this way. Chaucer has a poor opinion of him and ironically calls him "a noble ecclesiastical".

In contrast to these corrupt religious characters, Chaucer gives a pleasant picture of the **poor Parson**, a shepherd, who protects his flock from the wolf.

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre persoun of a toun;

He preaches sincerely, correctly and tries to practice what he preaches. He leads a simple, virtuous life of devotion and service. **A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys;**

The **Clerk** is not an ecclesiastical character but he is studying at church. The Clerk is one of the idealized characters. He is well-versed in logic.

A clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.

He does not run after showiness and worldly grandeur. He is a miser and poor. He is quick and meaningful in his talk. He is glad to learn and glad to teach. He is the picture of the poet's learning.

A very notable point in the portrayal of Chaucer's ecclesiastical characters is that the **good ones are dull and drab**; **they are not as alive and interesting as the bad ones**. This indicates that Chaucer was much more at home among real people who had their share of faults and failings which he enjoyed describing with all the artistic means at his command.People like the poor Parson and oxford clerk are idealized, unsubstantial figures whom we find without the warmth and vitality of the Friar and the Pardoner. Likewise, the Wife of Bath is a much more flesh and blood character than the Prioress.

To conclude, the profiteering clerics in the Prologue are easy going who lack spirit of sacrifice, respect for authority, acceptance of discipline, and at least a modicum of otherworldliness. The principal characteristics of Chaucer's monk, friar, pardoner and Summoner are greedy self-seeking, contempt for authority, evasion of discipline self-imposed in the vows of their orders, and a thorough-going worldliness, which not only sought the good things of life, but sought them at the expense of the needy. This great organisation, with its wealth, its power, and its conservative traditions, might have been expected to offer a safeguard against social decay but it was itself a fruitful breeding-ground for the very things which were disorganising feudal society.

"Chaucer's portraits do not illustrate a moral or philosophical thesis."

On first reading them, Chaucer's character sketches in the General Prologue certainly seem to serve as moral judgments on the portrayed individual. However, are these to be seen as functional as typifications of the entire social class that they represent or as portraits of contemporary individuals? I would argue that allegorist and literalist readings of the General Prologue are not mutually exclusive: that characters can exist for the reader on both levels. Insofar as they serve to illustrate an overall thesis, however, it seems sensible to concentrate of the characters as exemplars of their type and class.

Brewster states that "The only class system know to mediaeval theory" has "the familiar Three-fold division... into Knights, Clergy, and Ploughmen... Knights defend society, and maintain law and order; clergy defend men's souls and feed their minds; ploughmen provide food to maintain men's bodies." Although Chaucer chooses not to order his characters appearance in the General Prologue according to the class to which they belong, presumably because doing so would result in less opportunity for comparison, he appears to be sympathetic to such divisions.

The Knight, who we are first introduced to, obviously falls into the first category. Although Terry Jones sees him as something of a bloodthirsty mercenary, I feel he is projecting his own presentist negative attitude towards warfare onto a character Chaucer himself seems to be very sympathetic to. Indeed the Knight embraces and stands for values which Chaucer seems to wholeheartedly support: "trouthe and honour, freedom and curteusie." The rest of his household, his son the squire and the yeoman, seem to be morally worthy by association. His son, for all his youthful faults, is imbued with the same 'curteusie', and it seems so inevitable to me that he is going to mature into the Knight, that I see him as an image of the Knight as he was, before being ennobled by age and experience. As a fellow upholder of the law, the Sergeant of the Lawe can also be placed in this class, and he too is presented in largely sympathetic terms.

Chaucer's treatment of the ecclesiastical class is far less homogenous, ranging from his irony-free beautification of the Parson, to the little satirised Prioress and Monk, to the pilloried figure of the Friar. In fact, some view Chaucer's unfinished Canterbury Tales as the smoking gun, which reveals that the Church has him murdered for publishing such negative views of the clergy. However, his treatment of the clergy is not in any real sense radical or subversive; it merely reflects charges commonly levelled at the orders at the time. The Prioress is the first member of the clergy to appear and through her association with the Benedictine order we are invited to examine the behaviour of these

characters in light of their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Routine breaking of these supposedly sacred vows, along with the selling of indulgences and other such abuses are what eventually led to the Reformation.

The relative dearth of characters who can be considered ploughmen, figures who are directly concerned with the production of food, reflects the breakdown in feudal society and, more specifically, the breakdown in food supply due to the deaths of massive numbers of labourers at the hands of the Black Death. Although many contemporary figures attacked farm labourers of the day for demanding extortionate wages because of these conditions, Chaucer holds up his Ploughman as the epitome of simple, Christian living, "lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee". The Cook, with his very direct relationship to food production, is also characterised as an amenable fellow, but without the saintly virtues of the Ploughman However, the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 seems to have soured Chaucer's congeniality to the rural poor. This is evident in Chaucer's animalisation of the strong and brawny Miller. He compares his beard o the bristles on a sow. The fact that the Miller routinely breaks down doors with his head marks him out as a threshold-crosser, who does not respect the natural civic order. Chaucer time and time again employs physiognomy, the pop psychology of his day, in order to highlight the bestial and depraved side of his character. Similarly in the Pardoner physical and spiritual deformity go hand in hand.

The characters that do not fit in to this social framework are generally satirised as being overly concerned with the pursuit of profit or pleasure, the Merchant and Franklin being chief in each of these respective categories. The disinterested, asexual, and devoutly religious Clerk seems to be the moral example they should be following. In the five guildsmen, Chaucer mildly mocks middle-class self-importance, but neither holds them up as moral beacons or attacks them as degenerates.

As far as there is a philosophical thesis in The General Prologue, it centres on two qualities: caritas: charity and compassion, and cupiditas: greed and the inordinate desire for wealth. Chaucer seems to accept the cupiditas is a necessary evil insofar as it leads to a functional and productive society. For example, the Merchant's cupiditas is respected as it is honest and makes him a 'better' merchant. On the other hand, the Reeve's dishonest pilfering of his master's estate is seen as bestial, sub-human. His animal nature is reinforced by his association with his master's livestock: "His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye | His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye." Little more than an animal, his fate is evinced by his constant position at the rear of the company of pilgrims: the furthest from salvation. This seems to recognise that there will be recompense paid in the afterlife for holding cupiditas as one's central tenet, and, conversely, reward for caritas.

It is important to note that Chaucer's characters are neither stereotypes nor, as DW Robertson puts it "elaborate iconographic figures designed to show the manifold implications of an attitude". They are not one-sided unequivocal creations and my own interpretation of what Chaucer saw as their moral virtues and vices is far from unequivocal. The General Prologue, and of course The Canterbury Tales itself, is a rich and complex text, often ambivalent and ironic. Although we are dealing with archetypal figures, we are dealing with them outside the moral boundaries and strictures of everyday life; pilgrims in amoral zone of 'pleye' and 'game'. In Malcolm Andrew's words, "The poet creates a fiction with decontextualises his pilgrims: the commentators employ

a method which recontextualises them." In conclusion, Chaucer does not present us with a moral or philosophical thesis in these portraits. Nor does he provide an antithetical reaction against the hierarchal imposed moral and philosophical theses of church and feudal state. Instead, through his ambiguity and he offers us the opportunity to define and redefine the moral meaning of these brilliantly drawn portraits.

Elements of Drama and Novel in the Prologue

Chaucer had in him distinct characteristics of a novelist and a dramatist. His consummate art of story-telling in The Canterbury Tales does indicate that if he chose he could be one of the immortal novelists of the world. Chaucer proves himself a master of the art of characterisation, skilful in his handling of dialogue, delighting in action, and keenly alive to the value of effective situation and climax. Above all, he is the master of constructive art. He is able to weld different tales into harmonious groups.

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is the prologue of modern fiction. Its characterisation, realistic portrayal of life and a sort of structural unity give it the semblance of a novel in miniature. If we could take thirty per cent of Goldsmith, fifty of Fielding, and twenty of Walter Scott, and vitalise this compound with the spirit of the fourteenth century, we should get perhaps fairly near to another Chaucer. But it would be a Chaucer whose right hand wrote in prose and only his left in verse, and our formula, though it may be useful in suggesting the writers to whom Chaucer is most akin, and how modern he really is, would still be defective, for the charm of his poetry remains personal and individual. Chaucer like any other modern novelist was gifted with the ability of revealing the human heart and unravelling the complexities of sentiments.

Like a novelist Chaucer has a masterly **art of description and narration**. His portraits in the Prologue are no less vivid than the characters in any human comedy. The narrative style in the Prologue speaks of an inimitable precision and enviable literary style. The central incident is the pilgrimage which unifies the whole band of travellers to the shrine of St. Thomas into the inter-related people of a novel or the actors of a drama. Above all, it is Chaucer's stark realism and nearly complete objectivity which are the hall-marks of a modern novelist or a real dramatist of any age. The point is that Chaucer as it is evident to us in the Prologue does seem to be possessing the talents of a novelist and a dramatist. The prologues to the Tales are the counterparts of the soliloquies of Shakespeare or the monologues of Browning or the interior monologues of modern fiction writers. His negative capability matches the aesthetics of a true artist who presents his viewpoint not as a lyrical poet but as a passionate at the same time detached story-teller or playwright.

In Chaucer's works contains the seeds of the drama and novel. Had Chaucer been a contemporary of Shakespeare, he might well have written plays. Had he been a contemporary of Fielding, he might well have written novels. The power for both is implicit in the Canterbury Tales, and adds richness to that incomparable work. Throughout the Tales, there is not only creation, but interplay and clash of characters. The pilgrims, brilliantly pointed for us in the Prologue, are developed, and elaborated, some more, some less, as the poem proceeds, and always with a beautiful consistency. There is the mutual disparagement between the Miller and the Reeve, between the Summoner and the Friar; the attempt of the pardoner to make capital out of his story

and his vigorous repulse by the landlord. The Wife of Bath in the immensely garrulous and entertaining dissertation upon marriage, which precedes her story, reveals herself as a full-length comedy character, and satisfies, incidentally, the curiosity of the reader as to why he was casually told, in the Prologue, that she was deaf in one ear. The Knight (perfect and gentle) finds the Monk's catalogue of historical disasters unspeakably tedious. By means of these passages of narrative and comment between the tales Chaucer keeps his characters alive, each one being aware of the rest, so that the tales themselves, though they are in fact the main body of the work, are yet but an incident in the whole.

Chaucer is indeed properly to be called a poet; but he bears a closer relation to the great English novelists than to Spenser. The scholarship which is preoccupied with exposing the derivativeness of Chaucer's poetry tends also to obscure the remarkable newness of what Chaucer has done. How new Chaucer's poetry is it is difficult for us to apprehend because so many of the remarkable developments in English literature since—and each original author has been a new development—have been developments from what Chaucer did for the first time. The Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde are, if one thinks back to what there was before them which they are developments from, surprisingly new works of art.

With the Canterbury Tales Chaucer inaugurates the English novel; and, moreover, the Great Tradition of it. In this dramatic-poetic novel we see the English novel actually in being, with the characteristics of our eighteenth and nineteenth-century masterpieces. Chaucer's preoccupations here are those of the great novelists. He explores the theme of the individual's relation to the society in which he lives; launches the comedy of the clash of character and the conflict of interest and motives; and shows the comic and ironic effects obtainable from the class distinctions felt by the newly emerged bourgeoisie associated with the growth of town life and of the trades and commerce (the Wife of Bath is the new bourgeois wife asserting her independence). He observes, as do Jane Austen and George Eliot, the changes in manners and outlook between the older generation and the new—between the Knight and his son, and Franklin and his—and, like them he develops to the highest artistic level what is only in an elementary form elsewhere in his contemporaries the kind of characterization which distinguishes the English novel from Bunyan to Henry James—characters which, while exquisitely realistic in detail, are morally and socially typical.

Chaucer's tolerant observation and relish of humanity gave him a power of representing it, which has been rarely surpassed in any respect save depth. It has been disputed whether this power is rather that of the dramatist or that of the novelist, a dispute perhaps arguing a lack of the historic sense. In the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, Chaucer would certainly have been the one, and in the mid-nineteenth the other. It would be most satisfactory could we have his work. The author has, in fact, set himself a high task by adopting the double system above specified, and by giving elaborate descriptions of his personages before he sets them to act and speak up to these descriptions. It is a plan which, in the actual drama and the actual novel, has been found rather a dangerous one. But Chaucer discharges himself victoriously of his liabilities. And the picture of life which he has left us has captivated all good judges who have given themselves the very slight trouble necessary to attain the right point of view, from his own day to this.

Irony in The Prologue

Irony is a method of humorous or sarcastic expression in which the intended meaning of the words used is the direct opposite of their usual sense. It is also the feigning of ignorance in argument. The voice of the satirist speaking out of a mask is subtle irony. Behind the mask his face may be dark with fury or writhing with contempt, but his voice is calm, sometimes soberly earnest, sometimes lightly amused. The lips of the mask and its features are persuasive, almost real, perfectly controlled. Some of those who hear the voice, and see the polite lips, from which it issues, are persuaded that it is the utterance of truth and that the speaker believes everything he says. Aristotle said that irony was the opposite of boasting: it was mock-modesty, dissimulation, and self-depreciation.

Geoffrey Chaucer is frequently ironical in many respects. His irony is what metaphor is for later poets. Both irony and metaphor put into the same set of words a double meaning; whereas in metaphor they are linked by comparison, in irony they are linked by contrast. The linkage is important. In each case the two elements of the double meaning modify each other, though one may be dominant. In the case of irony the superficial 'false' meaning is still part of the total meaning. It modifies the "true" meaning, if only by asserting that even the underlying meaning is not the only competitor for our assent; or by establishing a limited validity even for simple mindedness. The obvious meaning is the contribution innocence makes to experience. More generally the duality of irony contributes a certain kind of uncertainty, and hence a need for toleration, not least for the poet himself, who uses irony to evade responsibility.

Chaucer’s irony is always gentle, seldom severe, and never savage. He is to all intents and purposes a comic ironist. His portraits in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales are excellent examples of comic irony. In fact, throughout the Prologue the reader has to be on his guard against Chaucer's seeming enthusiasm towards each of his pilgrims, realising that his irony operates indirectly through praise that is characteristically excessive and generous, whether sincere or not.

In the Prologue his remarks about the **Knight** that **'He was a verray, parfit gentil knight'** are straightforwardly respectful, but his generous tribute to the **Monk** '**A manly man, to been an abbot able'** should leave us wondering whether he means that most abbots were appointed for their worldliness and self-indulgence. When he rounds off the description of the **Merchant** by remarking "**For sothe he was a worthy man with alle"** Chaucer's irony is obvious, for he has just disclosed the pilgrim's dishonesty and hypocritical manner. Similarly, that **'verray parfit praktisour'** the **Physician**, although described in terms which recall the Knight, observes a code which inverts the standards of truth, honour and liberality which the Knight strives to uphold. Here Chaucer's seeming praise is doubly ironic.

The **physician** is not the genuine, perfect practitioner of a noble ideal but shrewd, miserly and self-regarding. The **nun** in Madame Eglentine is a charming imposture, imperfectly concealing a woman whose social ambitions lead her into an absurd confusion of purposes—a mimicking of courtly mannerisms that are completely inappropriate to her calling. She is a specimen of fascinating disparity between what she is and what she seems to be, and Chaucer exploits this comic incongruity in a very subtle manner. The **Wife of Bath** is subjected to irony when Chaucer while praising her

charitable nature points out that she goes out of all charity if some other woman in the parish takes precedence over her in making the offering. The implication is that charity should be evidenced by humility, not by pride, by gentleness, not by anger.

Leaving aside such idealisation as the **Knight**, the **Parson** and the **Plowman**, it may be undeniably asserted that Chaucer takes men as he finds them, obtaining that kind of amusement in the ironic yet sympathetic observation of his fellows which yields itself only to the artist's vision. Although he has a loving relish for human behaviour and human weakness, it is wrong, as some critics tend to do, to play down his irony. A high proportion of his pilgrims are rascals, and Chaucer knows that they are. Nor can we ignore his clear attack on corruption in the Church, though here again the attack is done obliquely through the presentation of individual characters. The **Monk** and the **Friar** and the **Summoner** are amusing enough characters as Chaucer describes them, but the behaviour of the latter two, brilliantly presented and magnificently comic though it is, is the behaviour of petty blackguards. The **Pardoner**, perhaps Chaucer's greatest masterpiece of character drawing, implies a whole world of moral hypocrisy.

Lastly, there is an element of Socratic irony in the prologue. He not only uses irony in portrayal of other character but also his own character and says: **My wit is short, ye may well understand**. Chaucer's point of view is no doubt secular throughout the Prologue, and he is intrigued rather than shocked by the weaknesses of human nature. But irony always has moral implications, and Chaucer in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales was not an ironist for nothing.

Satire in The Prologue

Satire is a genre of literature in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, into improvement. Although satire is usually meant to be humorous, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit as a weapon and as a tool to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society. Satire differs from humour in that it has a definite moral purpose. The satirist deliberately alienates our sympathies from those whom he describes, and as the true humorist is apt to pass from comedy to romance, and from romance to tragedy, so the satirist not infrequently ends by finding rage and disgust overpower his sense of the ridiculous. The fact is that satire is not Chaucer's natural bent. His interest lies in portraiture rather than in exposure. His object is to point life as he sees it, to hold up the mirror to nature.

Chaucer's kinship as a satirist is with Fielding. They are alike in a certain air of rollicking good-fellowship and a determination to paint men and women as they know them. Both enjoy a rough prank, and have little patience with over-refinement. Both give the readers a sense of studies honesty and kindliness, and know how to combine tenderness with strength. Both with all their tolerance, have a keen eye for hypocrisy or affectation and a sharp tongue wherewith to chastise and expose it. Chaucer hates no one, not even the Pardoner.

In Chaucer we have no sustained satire of the Popean or the Swiftean type. His genius is like that of Shakespeare, having a high degree of negative capability. Hence, Chaucer gives us no impression of being a great satirist, although in his writings especially in the

portraits of the Prologue we have sharp little sallies of satire. It would be rather more suitable to call Chaucer a comic satirist in relation to his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Comic satire predominates in extraordinarily rich Prologue.

There are, therefore, certain limitations of scope. The higher aristocracy are excluded, for the Knight is comparatively low ranking, and is in any case an ideal figure. The painfulness and rough comedy of the life of the great mass of the really poor find no place, and again their two representatives are idealized portraits. The characters of highest and lowest ranks were not suitable for comic treatment. In the Prologue we mainly see the middling people, and we see them through Chaucer's eyes from a slightly superior moral and social station. We can afford to laugh at them. We look through the eyes of a poet masculine, self-assured, delighted, who knows that there is "joy after woe, and after joy, sadness. He sees abuses but is neither surprised nor stung by them. Men are not angels, but neither are they devils. Chaucer gives us a vision of men and women in the world, and most of them have some relish of absurdity when looked at carefully especially when they require neither our loyalty nor our fear.

Chaucer does not see his company of pilgrims simply as an incongruous assortment of pantomime figures, to be enjoyed for their grotesquely comic oddity. The pervasive element of social satire in the General Prologue—most prominent in his account of the ecclesiastical figures—suggests Chaucer's serious concern at the debasing of moral standards. There are moments, as when he records the Friar's sneering contempt for the poor, which seem to show Chaucer's habitual good temper revolting against the cynical opportunism which had become widespread in ecclesiastical life. His usual attitude towards the moral weakness which he discloses is one of mocking. The Shipman is a thievish pirate, the Reeve a cunning embezzler, the Physician has a dishonest private understanding with his druggist, and the Man of Law 'semed bisier than he was'. The efforts of the Prioress to mimic courtly manners are detected and set down with the same intuitive sense of false appearance as allows Chaucer to penetrate the Merchant's imposing disguise. The mask of respectability is not roughly torn off, for while he is describing his pilgrims Chaucer is maintaining an outward manner that is awed and deferential; telling us that the Prioress was 'of greet desport', that the Monk was a manly man, 'to been an abbot able', or that the murderous Shipman was an incomparable navigator and pilot.

Because he does not insist upon their moral failings or hypocritical nature, revealing them with an ironic innocence of manner and leaving them to speak for themselves, Chaucer's approach to his pilgrims suggests a psychologist rather than a moralist' He presents vices and shortcomings within the context of human individuality, as a product of the curious pressures which stamp a unique personality upon each of the pilgrims. The Shipman's easy conscience is an integral part of the tough, self-reliant spirit of the man, which has acquired the wilfulness and moral unconcern of the elements in which he lives. His thefts and murders, the Franklin's Epicureanism, the Physician's avarice, interest Chaucer not as evidence of a breakdown of moral values but for what they reveal of individual character.

Thus Chaucer's satire is not directed against contemporary morals, but against the comic self-ignorance which gives man two' identities—the creature he is, and the more distinguished and inscrutable person he imagines himself to be.

Chaucer's Poetic style

The style of an author is his distinctive manner of writing or expressing thought in language. In commenting on Chaucer's style, it would be well to remember that he was writing in English at a time when that language was in a rather poor state of development. To Chaucer goes the credit of having developed the condition of his native language to such an extent, that only the addition of blank verse was required to make English poetry fully equipped. He took up a dialect and left it a language. He enriched it by-adapting words from foreign languages, especially French. He infused the rough English dialect with the refinement and polish of the French language. He brought flexibility to his native language.

Conversational and colloquial style: - As we read The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, we are immediately struck by its conversational tone. The verse flows with a pleasing fluidity. It shows Chaucer's mastery of the decasyllabic couplet. We find ordinary speech, common proverbs and idiomatic terms, and even contemporary slang in his poetry. It provides a conversational viewpoint to Chaucer's style.

Chaucer's **use of contemporary idiomatic terms and phrases,** adds to the colloquial style. One such instance, which immediately comes to mind, is in the lines about the Monk :

He yaf not of that text a pulled hen And
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre.

In The Prologue, we come across a **racy and forceful style**, which has the pungency of a proverb. It is especially evident in the fabliaux (comic verse), which present the comic aspects of ordinary life.

His owene hand he made laddres thre,
To climben by the rouges and the stalkes……
Unto the tubbes hanginge in the balkes ...

Chaucer's skill, in fact, lies in the smooth transition, which is effected from the "high" to the colloquial style.

Forceful directness and immediacy of style: - Chaucer's style has a directness and immediacy, which comes from the habitual employment of the verb 'to be' in describing the pilgrims. His statements are so plain and simple that they admit no qualifications.

"**A Monk ther was",** "his heed was balled", "**whit was bard as is the dayesie**"—these statements are clear, solid and irrefutable. The terms in which the pilgrims are described, are simple and direct. The most common of the adjectives used are, perfect, gay, fair, wise, and worthy. They often gain their strength and directness through masterly placing in a line. The Wife of Bath comes alive before us in the simplest, but so very graphic terms: **Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.**

The Shipman's tanned face is vividly described in very ordinary words:

The hoote smoer hadde masd his hewe brown.
Forceful directness of the figures of speech

The simple immediacy which marks the adjectives used for the pilgrims is to be found in Chaucer's images, too. Chaucer has plenty of images and similes. But they are all simple, direct, and never elaborate. At the same time, they have vivid and arresting quality. **His mouth as greet was a greet forneys** says Chaucer, and we get a direct picture of the cavernous mouth of the Miller. The Squire is "**as fresh as is the month of May**". The Friar's neck is as white as a lily (flour-delys), and his eyes shine like "**stars in the frosty night."** The Miller's beard is as red "**as any sow or fox**", while the Franklin has a beard, "**white as is a daisy."** The graphic description of the tuft of hair on the wart of the Miller's nose, is unforgettable. It is red "**as the bristles of a sow's ears".** The Pardoner's eyes look like those of a hare, and he has a voice which resembles that of goat. The Monk's horse is "**as brown as a berry"**, and the Franklin's purse is "**white as morning milk",** while the poor Oxford Clerk's horse is "**lean as rake".**

The images are derived from the common spheres of experience. They are uncomplicated and direct. Chaucer does not employ extended simile and metaphor in his poetry. His images are drawn from homely and familiar fields of life.

Use of intensifying terms to emphasise a point: - A special stylistic device used by Chaucer is the emphatic manner in which he underscores his point. Some of his statements have an air of clear finality. **"He was a verray parfit, gentil knyght",** sums up the Knight in simple and direct words. Some of the words which Chaucer uses frequently to intensify and emphasise a point, are ful, wd, al, certainly. They are all affirmative and positive terms. It seems to indicate a stylistic device through which Chaucer associates himself with the positive and generous outlook on life.

The Monk is "**a lord ful fat and in good poynt"** and "certainly he was a fair prelate". The Frankin had "**full many a fat partrirch"** in his house to satisfy his epicurean taste. The use of these intensive adjectives is at its most effective in the description of the five Guildsmen. Though they are described collectively, they are given a sharper reality by the emphasis implied in the terms, ful and al.

Ful fresshe and newe hir geere apiked was;
hir knives were chaped noght with bras
Bill al with silver; wrought ful clene and wel.

Chaucer emphasises on a point at times through arranging words in a way, which is not the normal manner :

God loved he best with al his hoote herte

The medieval stylistic device of alliteration is also to be found in Chaucer's poetry:

Ful long were his legges and ful lene
Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.

It gives the lines a musical effect. There are some words which Chaucer seems very fond of and which he uses fairly often. 'Wel koude he', wel knew he,' 'ful byg, etc., occur quite a few times in his poetry. Mostly, 'wel', 'ful', etc., are employed to enhance the metrical effect of the lines.

In conclusion, his style is direct, plain and conversational. His imagery is likewise direct and vivid, drawn from common and familiar fields of experience. He has a masterly ability of making a smooth transition from the 'high' to the colloquial style, without losing any fluidity of movement. He shows a sure judgement and confidence in the choice of the right words. The charm of fluent simplicity and perfect appropriateness of word to thought, make Chaucer's style an important aspect of his poetry.

Character of the Wife of Bath

The most vivid and famous portrait in The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, is, perhaps, the Wife of Bath. She is one character in whom the realistic and the individualistic elements of portraiture outweigh the typical. She is the most entertaining character in The Prologue. We enjoy her sheer vitality, robustness and earthy essence. Chaucer accepted folly, vice and immorality as part and parcel of men as well as women. In presentation of the Wife of Bath, we certainly do have satire, but the satire is not violent or bitter and fierce.

A vivid character of flesh and blood: - The Wife of Bath is the essence of elemental vitality. She is the woman of earthy physical passion, firm boldness and dominating personality. She comes before us vividly. Her red face, bold expression, huge and voluptuous body attired in a riding coat, the gaps in her teeth, her new shoes, broad wimple adoring her head, and her heavy and fine kerchiefs, all add to a startlingly vivid character of flesh and blood. She would not tolerate any other woman of her parish to give the offering before her at church. She was fully insistent on her rights of precedence, as she was a rich and prominent member of her parish. If any confusion about precedence occurred, she would be 'out of all charitee'. The Wife of Bath did not suffer from any false modesty. She knew her place in society and laid full claims to it.

Her forceful personality and experience of the world: - It is not without significance that she is the finest weaver in the country. She is a prosperous and important member of her community. Naturally, she dresses in accordance with her position in society. Her appearance is neat as well as forceful. She wore the best of clothes, though she was slightly overdressed on Sundays. However, she would want to impress upon the world that she is a successful business woman. She wears her bright scarlet stockings neatly and straight.

Her kerchiefs are 'full fine of ground', i.e., of fine texture. Her knowledge of travelling and experience of pilgrimages is shown in her choice of suitable dress and mount for the occasion. She wears a protective outer skirt around her broad and generous hips, and is mounted on an ambling horse, which has been trained to walk in a manner most comfortable for the rider. She also wears spurs, and hence we can conclude that she rides astride and not side-saddle.

The Wife of Bath has a forceful personality which suits her generous physical attributes. She has a firm mind which knows its wants clearly. She also knows how to get what she wants. She is jolly, gossipy, and popular woman fond of men's company and well versed in the art of love. She has widely travelled. We are told that she had visited Jerusalem thrice, besides other places of pilgrimage.

Her amorous adventure: - Her physical vitality is best represented by her various amorous adventures. She is a much-married woman—she has had five husbands and is ready for the sixth. Her promptitude in getting husbands would not have surprised her fellow pilgrims. The Wife of Bath, with her eager willingness to get married, would have found husbands with even greater promptitude. She is, however, the dominant partner in marriage. She would not allow her husband to rule the home. She would have firm control over her home as well as her husband. In her Prologue to her tale, she remarks.

"I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age
In the acts and in fruyt of marriage"

She is entirely as secular figure, and confesses that she has never aspired to live the perfect life. She has no use for transcendental religion.

The Wife of Bath has experienced not merely marital love, but has had a number of affairs in her youth. Her experience of love is subtly summed up by Chaucer when he says at the end of her portrait:

Or remedies of love she knew per chauce,
For She koude of that art the old chauce..

Two striking features : gap teeth and deafness: - The most vivid physical attributes of the Wife of Bath are, perhaps, that she was 'some-del def' and 'gat-toothed'. Gap teeth indicated wide travel, amorousness, and an envious, faithless, irreverent, luxurious, and bold nature. The Wife of Bath has all these features. The reason for her getting somewhat deaf is given later. Her fifth husband in an attempt to assert his male superiority hit her across her ears. But beyond the damage to her ears, we may be quite sure that Wife of Bath would not have allowed her husband to gain any superiority.

Her war against male domination: - The Wife of Bath is a pure militant as far as women's liberation is concerned. She is not merely an aggressive, uninhibited, vulgar woman dominating the particular men fortunate or unfortunate enough to have been married by her. She embodies the eternal female in revolt against a male-ordered and male-centred civilization. Men's evils and vices were firmly attributed to the temptation signified by women. The Wife of Bath, despite all her vulgarity and boisterous coarseness, embodies the demand for respectability for woman as individuals. She is at once a representative of all that a man dislikes in a women—nagging, spending, gossiping, etc.—and what every woman desires for, which is domination over males.

Conclusion: - The Wife of Bath has an awe-inspiring personality, overwhelming in its impact and flamboyancy. It is apt that she should be on the pilgrimage to Canterbury, for a pilgrimage in the Middle Ages was a means of pleasure as well as an object of

piety. The Wife of Bath is a clear-cut individual in her self-revelation before she tells her tale or gives her opinion on marriage, and tells her adventures in the marital field without a sign of inhibition. The Wife of Bath is the most complex character among the pilgrims.

The Prologue as a Picture of Fourteenth Century England

Chaucer is truly the social chronicler of England at the end of fourteenth century. His work is the most precious document for whoever wishes to evoke a picture of life as it then was. The fact is that Chaucer had intimate knowledge of the crosscurrents of English society of his time. His keen observation, vast study, extensive travel and variegated experience in the service of the state had familiarised him with the entire pageant of social life of those days. It was with the intention of describing his boundless knowledge of men and manners that he conceived the plan of the Canterbury Tales which encompass every aspect of life in the fourteenth century England.

The group of pilgrims described in the Prologue is itself an unequalled picture of the Society of Chaucer's time. Here are some thirty persons belonging to the most different classes. There is a **Knight** lately come from the foreign wars. He is a high-minded gentle-mannered, knightly adventurer, type of the courteous, war-loving chivalry which was passing rapidly away. With him is his son, a young **Squire**, curly haired and gay, his short, white-sleeved gown embroidered like mead with red-and-white flowers. He is an epitome of the gifts and graces of brilliant youth. Their servant is a **Yeoman**, in coat and hoof of a green, a sheaf of peacock-arrows under his belt, a mighty bow in his hand. He is the type of solid English yeomanry.

There is a whole group of ecclesiastical figures, representing in their numbers and variety the diverse activities of the medieval church. Most of them are **satirical portraits**, in their worldliness and materialism only too faithfully representative of the ecclesiastical abuses against which Wycliffe struggled. First of all there is a **Monk**, who cares only for hunting and good cheer. His bald head shines like glass, his bright eyes roll in his head. He rides a sleek brown palfrey, and has "many a dainty horse" in his stables. His sleeves are trimmed with fine fur at the wrists ; his hood is fastened under his chin with a gold love-not. As a companion figure to the hunting Monk, Chaucer gives us "Madame Eglantyne," the **Prioress**. She is a teacher of young ladies, speaks French "after the school of Stratford-atte-bowe." is exquisite in her table-manners, counterfeiting as well as she can the stately behaviour of court.

Other ecclesiastics are there, hangers-on and caterpillars of the church. The **Friar**, intimate with hospitable franklins, innkeepers, and worthy women, despises beggars and lazars. The **Summoner** is a repulsive person with "fire-red cherubim face". The **Pardoner** "come from Rome all note" has a bag full of pardons which he sells as relics of the holy saints to gullible people. Chaucer's treatment of these evil churchmen is highly good-natured and tolerant. He never takes the tone of moral indignation against them. But he does better, he sets beside them, as the type of true shepherds of the church, a "poor **Parson**”. Chaucer paints the character of the Parson, poor in this world's goods, but "rich of holy thought and work," with loving and reverent touch. The Parson's brother travels with him—a **Plowman**, a "true swinker and a good", who helps his poor

neighbours without hire and loves them as himself. He reminds us of Piers the Plowman, in the wonderful Vision which is the antitype of Chaucer's work.

A crowd of other figures fill the canvas. There is a **shipman** from the west-country, a representative of those adventurous seamen, half merchant-sailors, half smugglers and pirates, who had already made England's, name a terror on the seas and paved the way for her future naval and commercial supremacy. There is a poor **Clerk of Oxford**, riding a horse as lean as a rake, and dressed in threadbare cloak, who spends all that he can beg or borrow upon his studies. He represents that passion for learning which was already astir everywhere in Europe, and which was awaiting only the magic touch of the new-found classical literature to blossom out into genuine thought and imagination. There is a **Merchant**, in a Flemish beaver hat, on a high horse, concealing, with the grave importance of his air, the fact that he is in debt. There is a group of **guild-members,** in the livery of their guild, all worthy to be aldermen; together with the merchant, they represent the mercantile and manufacturing activity which was lifting England rapidly to the rank of a great commercial power. There is the **Wife of Bath**, almost a modern feminist figure, conceived with masterly humour and realism, a permanent human type. She has had "husbands five at church-door, "and though" somdel deaf," hopes to live to wed several others. She rides on an ambler, with spurs and scarlet hose on her feet, and on her head a hat as broad as a buckler.

Apart from the men and their manners, the Prologue also sheds light on **contemporary clothing, food and occupations**. Almost every character man or woman is in a typical dress and other personal array. Several of the pilgrims are conspicuously armed, others carry small items of equipment, like a silken purse or a pouch or a pair of sharp spurs or a musical instrument. Chaucer uses the details of clothing and other outfit not only to describe the pilgrim's appearance but also to throw further light on his or her character. Thus the Wife of Bath, with her ambition to be the first wife in her parish. The brooch of the Prioress bearing the motto Amor Vincit Omnia indicates that this nun has a character vacillating between secular and divine love.

Chaucer's descriptions of the pilgrims and their food vary at a great deal. We only read that the Knight on his campaigns had often "the bord bigonne," that the Squire "carf before his fader" at the table, and that the Prioress had elegant table manners, never slobbered, and liked to feed her little dogs on bread and milk. The Monk loved hunting and presumably ate venison and game. His special dish was a roast fat swan, a delicacy usually eaten only by kings, abbots, and such folk. We are not told that the Friar had any specially favourite dish, but instead of consorting with the poor, like St. Francis, he loved taverns and tapsters, and all "sellers of vitaille." The Summoner loved garlic, onions, leeks, and strong bood-red wine. This exuberant taste no doubt accounted for his bad, incurable complexion. The Clerk of Oxford quite frankly preferred books to food, and economised in order to add to his library. But the Franklin was a real epicure. His bread and ale were always first class, and his house was never without baked meats, both fish and flesh. It snowed meat and drink in his house, and he had all seasonable dainties provided, partridges, bream, pike, with suitable sauces. He kept practically open house, and was severe with his cook if the flavouring of his dishes was not absolutely to his taste.

The Cook who accompanied the party was the sort of man employed by a City company or at an Inn of Court or by an innkeeper. He was an expert, and could boil chickens and

marrow bones, and cook well-flavoured tarts. He appreciated London ale, and could roast, seethe, boil, and fry and was a successful maker of meat-pies and blanc-mange.

The list of the Cook's capabilities gives us a good idea of the scope of entertainment possible for people of comfortable means, and a good deal of this variety could be obtained at biggish inns on well-known highways and in large towns.

Chaucer has made a **direct transcription from common life**; and, since ordinary things and ordinary people are the most representative, he has provided an invaluable document for those who wish to call up the social life of the time. But Chaucer does not attempt to chronicle contemporary events, nor concern himself with politics or public questions. Chaucer, like his pilgrims, is more interested in his own. His characters, like the majority of people in all time, are wrapped up in their own affairs, and untroubled by the storms around them, except insofar as their private interests are touched. Nevertheless, they are distinctive of their time and country. The Knight stands for the finest chivalry of the Crusades. The clergy are characteristic of his time. Chaucer painted from the life, are the actual men whose vices and corruption Wycliffe and his followers denounced so vehemently.

Finally, it must be borne in mind that as a painter of his society Chaucer acts more as a poet and artist than as a chronicler. His treatment of English men and manners of the fourteenth Century is not as a social reformer but as a tolerant humanist and his attitude of toleration carries more conviction than the denunciation of a moralist.

The Prologue : As a portrait gallery

The Prologue has rightly been called a 'portrait-gallery'. The pilgrims, who collect at the Tabard to set out on their journey to Canterbury, belong to a variety of classes and professions. Chaucer is the first English poet to present such a lovely procession of men and women, who are differentiated from one another by the subtlest touches of characterization. The characters come alive on the pages of The Prologue. They are vital and realistic.

Cross-section of the fourteenth century English society: - The Prologue is often referred to as a social chronicle, and Chaucer as a social historian. Though The Prologue is much more than a mere social chronicle, there is truth in the remark that it gives a cross-section of English society in the fourteenth century. Through the clever device of a pilgrimage, Chaucer has been able to assemble the representatives of the widest possible section of the society of his day. Only the aristocracy and the lowest rungs of society are left out—both classes would have been out of place on such a pilgrimage.

The Knight heads the procession of pilgrims. He has the highest social position among Chaucer's pilgrims. He belongs to the **Chivalric code**. He is accompanied by his son, who is also his **Squire**, and by his **Yeoman**, as was customary for the knights of the medieval times. The Knight has distinguished himself in battle, both in heathen and Christian lands. His son, too, has shown his prowess in wars. He represents the devotee of courtly love. The Yeoman is a forester and a loyal servant to the **Knight** and the Squire.

After the chivalric order, comes the **ecclesiastical order**, i.e., the representatives of the regular clergy. We have a **Prioress**, a **Monk**, and a **Friar**. Each presents the various degrees of corruption and degeneracy which was prevalent in the religious orders of the day. The Prioress' mind seems to be divided between the demands of the religious and the attractions of the secular aspects of life. The motto on her brooch, 'Love Conquers All', clearly indicates the confusion. The Monk hunts and enjoys sumptuous food, contrary to his vows of seclusion and abstinence. The Friar is typical of the order as found in Chaucer's time. He makes money by misusing his authority.

After the ecclesiastical characters representing the regular clergy, we have a procession of **middle class representatives**. Among them are the representatives of trade, the learned professions, a sailor, and other occupations. The **Miller** typifies his class of the day in his ability to cheat and make money. The **Municipal** is clever enough to outwit his learned masters. The **Reeve** cheats both his lord and the tenants.

The rising interest and stability in **trade** is represented by the **Merchant**, whose main desire is to keep the seas free of piracy. The **Shipman** represents England's widening power over the seas. He is typical of the sea captains of the day in his ruthlessness and lack of conscience. There is a **Franklin** who is hospitable and well off. The learned professions are represented by **The Doctor of Physic** and **The Oxford Clerk.** Typical of his age and, perhaps, typical of some doctors through all ages, Chaucer's physician is not too worried by making money out of an epidemic. He likes gold, we are told. **The Lawyer**, too, is adept at entailing property for his own benefit. The **rising middle** class is represented by the **five prosperous guildsmen** whose wives are ambitious of great status and respectability.

If the **corruptness of the clergy** is once again evident in the lecherous **Summoner** and the Cheating **Pardoner**, we have the **good Christian spirit** exemplified in the **Parson** and his brother the **Ploughman**. But the Summoner and The Pardoner exemplify the corruption and degeneracy of morals in Chaucer's time. The Summoner teaches the people the exact opposite of what he is supposed to tell them. He is quite ready to ignore the sins of people if they are willing to bribe him. The Pardoner sells false relics and bogus pardons. Both are partners of an equal temper.

Perhaps the most vibrant personality in The Prologue is **the Wife of Bath**. While she is more individualised than typical, she also represents the **rising middle class**. She is a first-rate weaver of cloth, and a very rich woman. A much married woman, she indicates the existing social conditions in which rich single women were never left single for long.

Typical, universal and individual traits of the characters: - The pilgrims represent different classes and professions of the time. They embody the traits which are considered typical of then: particular position in society and their profession. Incidentally, Chaucer's pilgrims represent the ‘best’ in each profession. **The Doctor's greed** for making money at the time of an epidemic is at once **typical of the medieval doctor** and also seems to be an individual trait of the particular doctor.

Particulars of dress, moral qualities, behaviour, special features, idiosyncrasies, etc., serve to individualise the pilgrims. The **Squire's pleasantly embroidered dress** and his constant singing, give an individual touch. The Knight's fustian doublet indicates his sober nature while contrasting him with its hair like the bristles of a sow's ears. We 'see'

the thinness of the Reeve and the Franklin's beard, which is white as a daisy. The Wife of Bath is a vibrant personality who wears scarlet stocking and huge kerchiefs. She laughs and jokes and exhibits exuberant energy. The fearsome ugliness of the Summoner comes out clearly in his red face full of pimples. He gets drunk and is fond of garlic and leek. **The Pardoner, has thin hair and shining eyes like hare's**. His voice is thin as a goat's. The Monk wears rich clothes, which at once typifies the fourteenth century monks while individualising him. The Prioress has exquisite table manners.

The details are not only typical of each pilgrim's class. They often belong to **basic human nature**. We may not find such a Miller now, but the traits embodied in the Miller could easily be found in some other person. The **vibrant sexuality and boisterous sense** of fun of the **Wife of Bath** can be found in some **human beings in all ages and nations**. This is true of most of the traits shown by Chaucer in his pilgrims. He has given in each one certain basic feature which are common to human beings through the ages. And he has dealt with all possible facets of the human personality in his pilgrims. We see a mixture of the good and the bad, and all shades of grey as well. We see the Chaucer's tolerant vision and joy in God's creation.

Lastly, Chaucer shows the full realisation that God has created all kinds of human beings, and there is no cause for man to disapprove or criticise violently. He accepted the imperfections in human beings, and presented them in all their variety without castigating their vices or frowning upon their follies. He was an amused and tolerant spectator of God's plenty. He took keen joy in the created world. Life to him was a vast field of delights, and this is very much evident in The Prologue.

"Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next, in majesty; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no further go.
To make a third, she joined the former two."

John Dryden

"O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,

O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,

God-gifted organ-voice of England,

Milton, a name to resound for ages;"

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608, into a middle-class family. He was educated at St. Paul's School, then at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he began to write poetry in Latin, Italian, and English, and prepared to enter the clergy.

After university, however, he abandoned his plans to join the priesthood and spent the next six years in his father's country home in Buckinghamshire following a rigorous course of independent study to prepare for a career as a poet. His extensive reading included both classical and modern works of religion, science, philosophy, history, politics, and literature. In addition, Milton was proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, and Italian, and obtained a familiarity with Old English and Dutch as well.

During his period of private study, Milton composed a number of poems, including "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "On Shakespeare," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and the pastoral elegy "Lycidas." In May of 1638, Milton began a 13-month tour of France and Italy, during which he met many important intellectuals and influential people, including the astronomer Galileo, who appears in Milton's tract against censorship, "Areopagitica."

In 1642, Milton returned from a trip into the countryside with a 16-year-old bride, Mary Powell. Even though they were estranged for most of their marriage, she bore him three daughters and a son before her death in 1652. Milton later married twice more: Katherine Woodcock in 1656, who died giving birth in 1658, and Elizabeth Minshull in 1662.

During the English Civil War, Milton championed the cause of the Puritans and Oliver Cromwell, and wrote a series of pamphlets advocating radical political topics including the morality of divorce, the freedom of the press, populism, and sanctioned regicide. Milton served as secretary for foreign languages in Cromwell's government, composing official statements defending the Commonwealth. During this time, Milton steadily lost his eyesight, and was completely blind by 1651. He continued his duties, however, with the aid of Andrew Marvell and other assistants.

After the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, Milton was arrested as a defender of the Commonwealth, fined, and soon released. He lived the rest of his life in seclusion in the country, completing the blank-verse epic poem Paradise Lost in 1667, as well as its sequel Paradise Regained and the tragedy Samson Agonistes both in 1671. Milton oversaw the printing of a second edition of Paradise Lost in 1674, which included an explanation of "why the poem rhymes not," clarifying his use of blank verse, along with introductory notes by Marvell. He died shortly afterwards, on November 8, 1674, in Buckinghamshire, England.

Paradise Lost, which chronicles Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Eden, is widely regarded as his masterpiece and one of the greatest epic poems in world literature. Since its first publication, the work has continually elicited debate regarding its theological themes, political commentary, and its depiction of the fallen angel Satan who is often viewed as the protagonist of the work.

The epic has had wide-reaching effect, inspiring other long poems, such as Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock, William Wordsworth's The Prelude and John Keats's Endymion, as well as Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein, and deeply influencing the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake, who illustrated an edition of the epic.

The Rise of Puritanism in the Age of Milton

The Age of Milton, the age in which the great poet matured and created, covers roughly the first seventy years or so of the 17th century. Thus in a way Milton is the connecting link between the glorious age of Queen Elizabeth, the Puritan age which followed, and the Restoration Age. It was an age of disillusionment, of increasing gloom and pessimism, and this melancholy and gloom of the age colours the literature of the period. In order to appre-ciate the spirit of Milton's works it is essential to form an idea of his age.

Nature of Puritanism: - It was during this period that Puritanism emerged as the great controlling, moral and social force. Let us here first consider what we exactly mean by Puritanism and then proceed to examine the political, social and religious causes that gave rise to it, and its impact on the literature of the period.

In the broadest sense Puritanism may be regarded as the renaissance of the moral sense of man. The Greco-Roman renais-sance of 15th and 16th centuries was largely pagan and sensuous. It did not touch the moral nature of man, it did nothing for his religious, political and social emancipation. The Puritan movement, on the other hand, was the greatest movement for moral and politi-cal reform. Its aims were:

(1) Religious liberty i.e., that men should be free to worship according to their conscience
(2) Civil liberty i.e., they should enjoy full civil liberty.

The Puritans wanted to make men honest and to make them free. They insisted on the purity of life. In matters of religion the Puritans were fanatics. They were extremists. There had been Puritans even during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. They did not accept the Anglican Church, which was essentially a compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. They considered its creeds and public worship as too much like Popery. They advocated Church reform. Moreover, they had very strict view about life and conduct. They laid down very austere ideals of life. They were against common pleasures, even innocent ones, like drama, considered singing and dancing as immoral, and hence in the beginning the term 'Puritan' was a term of contempt applied to such extremists. We find frequent satirical references to them in the plays of Shakespeare. The general tendency of the Puritan was anti-social. "Beauty in his eyes was a snare and pleasure a sin; the only mode of social intercourse which he approved was a sermon." As Macaulay puts it, he hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectator. The Puritans thus stood for

(1) Church reform,

(2) For the reform of social life according to their austere ideals,

(3) For the ideal of liberty, both religious and political—man should be free to worship according to his own conscience unhampered by the state.

Various Causes of Its Rise

Political: - The wise, moderate policies of Queen Elizabeth had appealed to all sections of society and Puritanism could not make much headway. But conditions changed with the coming of James I to the throne; the wise Elizabethan compromise soon broke down. A number of causes led to widespread discontent and the emergence of the Puritans as a strong national force. First, there was the theory of the divine right of kings, the theory that the king could do no wrong. James I had exalted ideals of kingship and aimed at despotic powers, but he was not fitted to play the role of flawless divinity. He was ill-mannered, grotesque, and tactless in appearance, and soon made the English Court the laughing stock of Europe. This divine right theory was not palatable to

the English people, it smacked of tyranny and shocked the innate English love of indepen-dence. Puritans regarded it as a direct attack upon their personal and political liberty.

Immorality and Corruption: -Secondly, the immorality and profligacy of the king and his courtiers also fed the flames of discontent. The corruption in high places did much to alienate the sympathies of the common man, and greatly strengthened the moral and social influence of the Puritans, who despised the Court, "as a place of infamy, alien to all good morals". Immorality of the king and the Court is a frequent object of satire in the contemporary literature.

Economic: -Thirdly, James and his ministers were extravagant, they were constantly in debt and constantly in need of money. When James approached the Parliament for money, it demanded more rights and privileges for itself—that it should control religion and finance, and even give advice on foreign policy. James then tried to raise money by granting trade monopolies to his favourites. This raised the hostility of the traders, merchants and manufacturers. It was an encroachment on their rights, and economic virtues of thrift, sobriety and economic living appealed to this middle-class element. Thus emerged a union of interests against James I. This makes the Jacobean Age, a period of stress and strain giving rise to a sense of frustration, and disillusionment.

Internal Dissensions: -The absence of foreign wars also did much to foster internal dissensions. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, there was no longer any danger of a foreign attack. A foreign war has the great merit of diverting the attention of the people. Now freed from the fears of foreign war, more and more people turned to the discussion of domestic politics. Criticism of the policies of the King and of the immorality and artificiality of his court was widespread. Thus was fostered the critical and satirical temper which is reflected in the plays of Ben Jonson. Social evils were rampant, and satirical references to the follies of the age are frequent in the literature of the period. The rift between the king and his people widened. The court became more uxurious and extravagant, the people were more and more alienated, the appeal of Puritanism increased, and it became a significant force in national life.

Tactlessness of Charles I: - James I was sufficiently clever and died just sufficiently soon, and thus in his reign there was no open conflict between the king and his people. But he left behind him serious problems for his son Charles I (1625). Charles was handsome, cultured and graceful, just such a king as was likely to win the heart of his people. However, he was tactless and did not attach much importance to public sentiments. He surrounded himself with evil counsellors— and with their help tried to enforce the divine right theory of kings. His absolutism roused the apprehensions of the people. In politics he was entirely unscrupulous. Moreover, he had a Catholic queen and was himself suspected of having Catholic leanings. His policies both religious and political, both in Scotland and Ireland, were complete and abject failures. The treasury was already bankrupt and he and his courtiers were not only profligates but also highly extravagant. In dire need of funds, he appealed to the Parliament which demanded even greater privileges for itself. No compromise was possible between the despotic Charles and the Parliament consisting mainly of elements hostile to the King. The stress and strains in national life increased resulting in the Civil War between the King and the Parliament which broke out in 1641.

Frustration and Disillusionment—Loss of Faith:- The age of Milton is an age of uncertainty, misgiving, despondency, anxiety, frustration, pessimism and inner gloom, and in all these respects in sharp contrast to the glorious and exuberant age of Elizabeth when the nation marched from achievement to achievement with zest and confidence. There are a number of political and social causes for this mood of mis-giving and apprehension which overtook the nation during this period. The personal unpopularity of

the king, James I, uncouth and awkward, who made the English court the laughing stock of all Europe, the lowering of standards of national morality and conduct, loss of national dignity, slackness of discipline, plots and intrigues both political and religious, increasing fear of French and Papal interventions, all contributed to the atmosphere of uncertainty and misgiving, and this in its turn bred pessimism and frustration. Further, there was a clash of ideals and philosophies; the old world, the medieval world, with its scholastic learning and metaphysics was breaking down under the impact of new philosophy. Another cause was the influence of Machiavelli whose work The Prince enjoyed wide popularity. His materialistic doctrines along with his Satanic philosophy—that the world order is not moral, but essentially immoral—caused much bewilderment and confusion, and loss of faith in existing values and ideals. All this finds expression in the literatures of the day, more specially its Drama.

London: The Centre of National Life: - In the end, a word may be added regarding the prominence of London during the age and its influence on the literature of the period. It was the centre of the English court and so the abode of the fashionable and cultured upper classes. As the court patronised art and learning, the city was also the haunt of the men of letters of the age. Practically, all the prominent writers of the day made London their home. Shakespeare, Donne, Ben Jonson, Milton—to name only the greatest—were all Londoners. They would meet in taverns, discuss literature or current politics, and frequently come to blows. Tavern brawls were frequent, and even leading personalities were involved in them. The setting of Jonson's Comedies is London, and London fashions, follies and frivolities are frequent objects of his satire.

Literary Trends: - The atmosphere of conflict, stress and strain, which enveloped the nation even before the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603, had an adverse effect on literature. The decline from the high Elizabethan standard is apparent in several ways:

(a) The output, especially of poetry, is much smaller, and the fashion is toward shorter poems, especially the lyric. The poetry of the period is largely lyrical, and Donne and Ben Jonson are the two most outstanding and original lyricists of the age. Milton who links up the Puritan age with the Restoration is a class by himself,

(b) There is a marked decay in the exalted poetical fervour of the previous age. In the new poetry there is more of intellectual play than of passion and profundity. And especially in prose, there is a matured melan-choly that one is apt to associate with advancing years,

(c) There is a marked increase in prose activity, and prose is an almost invariable accompaniment of a decline in poetry.

In an age which, by comparison with the Elizabethan age, produced relatively few great writers, Milton stands as the one man who may claim a place among the very greatest. His prose is among the finest controversial writing in the language, and his poetic achievement has generally been considered to be second only to that of Shakespeare.

Besides Milton, there are the Metaphysicals and the Caroline lyricists. The term Metaphysical was first used by Dr. Johnson, who applied it to Cowley and Donne. It denotes the work of a group of poets who came directly or indirectly under Donne's influence. Donne's poetry is a poetry of revolt, revolt against Elizabethan tradition. Usually lyrical in nature, his work shows a surprising blend of passion and thought; his poems are full of learned imagery and striking conceits, and, at their best, reveal great psychological insight and subtlety of thought. To this school belong such great poets as Crashaw, George Herbert, Vaughan, and Marvell.

While most of the Metaphysical poets were of a religious and mystical cast, the Cavalier lyricists best represented by Herrick, Lovelace, and Suckling, deal with the theme of love. They followed Ben Jonson in their classical restraint and concise lucidity. Their work is simple and graceful in structure and finely polished in style.

The prose output during the age is copious and excellent in kind. There is a notable advance in the sermon; pamphlets are abundant; and history, politics, philosophy, and miscellaneous kinds are well represented. Milton's Areopagetica is an immortal monument of English prose. In addition, there is a remarkable advance in prose style and the dramatists contribute a great deal to this advance. Jonson uses prose in his comedies. The controversies and conflicts of the day, both political and religious, result in the rise of satire and pamphleteering, and this in turn contributes to the advance of prose.

Many things combined to cause the decay of drama at this time. Chief among these was the strong opposition of the Puritans. In temper, the age was not dramatic. The actual dramatic work of the period is small and unimportant and characterised by immorality, obscenity, sensationalism, violence, and a free exploita-tion of unnatural themes, such as incest. However, Milton's Samson Agonistes occupies a unique place in the history of English drama. It is the only successful classical Tragedy in the English language.

Paradise Lost: Summary and Critical Analysis

The fable or story for the epic is taken from the Bible; it is the simple and common story of the fall of Adam and Eve form the grace of God due to their disobedience of Him. Paradise Lost encompasses a little more of the biblical story. In heaven, Lucifer (who became Satan after his being thrown to the hell), was unable to accept the supremacy of God, and led a revolt against His divine authority. After a terrible war with His Angels, he was finally thrown to hell, where they lay nine days in a burning lake.

Then Lucifer arose from the burning pitch and resolved- though at the same time despairing – that "all was not lost," that he would take revenge on God. Arousing his friends, he did his best to bring them to spirits, and decided that his purposes could be achieved by guile rather than by force; he decided to take revenge on God by spoiling his latest creation the Eden and the human beings there. The devils built an elaborate palace, Pandemonium, in which Satan organized a conference to decide on immediate action. Moloch advised war. Belial recommended a slothful existence in Hell.

Mammon proposed peacefully improving hell so that it might equal and rival Heaven. Beelzebub, second in command, arose and informed that God and created Earth, which he had peopled with good creatures called humans. It was Beelzebub's proposal to investigate this new creation, seized it, and seduces its inhabitants to the cause of the fallen angels, and saw Satan approaching Earth. God's angel Gabriel under the command of God, appointed two other angels to safeguard Adam and Eve, but they arrived too late to prevent Satan. He had already influenced Eve's dreams. Eve, in her strange dream had been tempted to taste of the fruit of the Tree of knowledge. After the sinful act of disobedience had been committed, God sent the angel Raphael to the garden to warn them. Raphael told Adam and Eve in detail the story of the Great War between the god and the bad angles (much of such stories are told in such conversation and flashback). He told of the creation of the world and how Earth was created in six days and angelic choir singing the praises of God or the seventh days. He cautioned Adam not to be too curious. Adam then told how he had been warned against the Tree of knowledge of God and Evil, and how Eve was created from his rib. After the departure of Raphael, Satan entered the body of a sleeping serpent. In the mourning Eve proposed that they work apart. Adam, remembering the warning of Raphael, opposed her wishes, but Eve prevailed and the couple parted. Alone, Eve was accosted by the serpent, which flattered

her into tasting the fruit of the Tree of knowledge. Eve gave the fruit to Adam, who was at first horrified, but who in his love for Eve, also ate the fruit. Just after eating the forbidden fruit, the couple knew lust for the first time. They knew sickening shame. The guardian angel came to earth to pass judgment. Christ sentenced the serpent to be forever a hated enemy of mankind. He also announced punishment of Eve; her sorrow would be multiplied by the bearing of children and that she would be the servant of Adam to the end of time. Adam, said Christ, would eat in sorrow, would eat bread only by toiling and sweating. This was the curse to man. But more important, he lost God's grace. As Christ announced the punishment, Death and sin, left the gates of Hell to join their father Satan on Earth. Satan sent sin and Death as his ambassadors on Earth. He went back to hell to see that his followers had all become hissing snakes. God made great changes on earth. He replaced the eternal spring with the changing seasons; he created the violence and misery of storms, winds, hail, ice, floods and earthquakes; he sentenced Adam and Eve to expulsion form Eden. Adam and Eve thought of committing suicide, but Michael, the angel sent by God, gave them new hope; he gave Adam a vision of life and death, the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires, and also showed them how in the future Adam and Eve's progeny would go through their evil days, to the flood when God would destroy all life except the good seeds preserved by Noah, and be finally redeemed through Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension as the redeemer. After Michael gave Adam and Eve this vision, they were pacified, especially because they saw that their children would be saved. They walked form the heights of paradise to the barren plains below. Metaphorically, they fell from the original bliss of god's grace to the present state of mortality, guilt, shame and suffering.

This simple story of 'fall' has become a locus of many themes after Milton used in his epic. He took an apparently very simple story of the "Fall" form the Bible, but he blended within it his puritan thoughts, renaissance humanism, his political as well as domestic ideals, and many such meanings. The 'invocation' is the very beginning of the epic in which Milton prays to the Muse, the Christian spirit, to help him write well. The ninth book is the climactic part of the epic narrative, as well as a book that contains several thematic issues of the whole epic.

The most obvious theme of Paradise Lost is justifying the fall of man, God's punishment and his reopening of the path of salvation to them; in short, the epic justifies how God is right in his treatment of man throughout all these. Milton has explored the sin which brought about the downfall of man. The prime cause of the fall is disobedience to God; the cause of Eve's disobedience is her passion overwhelming her right reason. Adam is also guilty of disobedience; his sin is dread of loneliness and also the surrender of his God given reason to passion. Due to love, he immediately decides to share Eve's fate. Milton emphasizes the importance of reason. Man is noble by nature, but he has free will, and hence free to choose and capable of action, morally good or bad for which he alone is responsible. Milton does not believe in Calvinism according to which God has decided everything, and a man's destiny has been fixed before his birth. Milton is a great humanist pinning his faith in the liberty and adventure of man. Milton therefore believes that God was justified in leaving Adam and Eve exposed to evils, and leaving their reasoning free; only that defines human beings as supreme creatures. God was also right in punishing Adam and Eve. The purpose of Paradise Lost is, therefore, to assert eternal providence and justify the way of God to men.

Milton believes in the orthodox idea of redemption. When men will be redeemed through Christ, they will rise to a more excellent state than Paradise form which Adam and Eve were turned out. Thus Adam did a useful act while sinning. Tillyard says, "Paradise Lost is a mental pilgrimage; the loss of one paradise and the finding on this earth of a paradise within ourselves that is happier far". The paradise in which Adam and Eve lived before eating the forbidden fruit was like a prison. It might have satisfied God, but it would have kept man spiritually undeveloped. So long as knowledge was withheld from

man, his obedience to God was meaningless. Moreover the virtue which Adam and Eve possessed in Paradise was a "fugitive and cloistered virtue", and therefore it was no virtue in the real sense. What man lost by disobedience was only a state of innocence and ignorance. Men gain spiritual rebirth by controlling their passions. And they will find a Paradise within them 'happier far'. Man has all the powers of working out the best, and moves upward, and finds the paradise within himself. This could not be possible by paying homage to God in a state of ignorance in Eden's paradise. Eve sins through weakness of reason whereas Adam through weakness of will.

Milton's style in writing the Paradise Lost has been called a 'grand style', which means it is an elevated, serious, highly crafted, and different from common speech. It is in fact so unfamiliar to common language, even the usual literary language, that Dr. Johnson accused Milton of 'pedantry'. The charge is basically based on his writing that was heavily Latinated. Indeed many critics have complained that Milton spoilt the English language. But in other ways he has contributed to the development of the English language as a literary language. Milton's 'grand', style can be discussed under four or five heads: rhythm and music, word game and figures of speech, diction and decorum, syntax, and remoteness and sublimity of language and theme.

The meter or rhythm of Milton's epic poem is usually called the blank verse, but it is not the common blank verse (lines in iambic pentameter without rhyme); Milton adapted it to his own convenience and purpose. The lines in Paradise Lost do contain ten syllables usually, but the lines contain any number of stresses from three to eight. So, it would not be appropriate to say that this is done by using traditional techniques of variation. Furthermore, the stresses differ in degree and position. The pause or caesura is another even more important feature of rhythm in Milton. The pause falls at different places of the lines, and the weight of different pauses is also different; there are light or shorter pauses and heavy or longer pauses give different effects to the narrative.

Milton's diction is heavily Latin. Even when he uses English words, they have the Latin connotations beneath. The words are so meticulously chosen that many critics have blamed his diction as too labored. Milton somehow 'invented English that is extremely unfamiliar and pedantic. He uses words in such ways that there are always both literal and symbolic meanings, with both English denotations and Latin connotations. His descriptions are florid and highly picturesque. He uses images to reinforce the theme. He shifts tone along with the change of description and setting. That usually helps him shift the emotional intensity, or avoid monotony.

Paradise Lost Book I

Summary

Book I of Paradise Lost begins with a prologue in which Milton performs the traditional epic task of invoking the Muse and stating his purpose. He invokes the classical Muse, Urania, but also refers to her as the "Heav'nly Muse," implying the Christian nature of this work. He also says that the poem will deal with man's disobedience toward God and the results of that disobedience. He concludes the prologue by saying he will attempt to justify God's ways to men.

Following the prologue and invocation, Milton begins the epic with a description of Satan, lying on his back with the other rebellious angels, chained on a lake of fire. The poem thus commences in the middle of the story, as epics traditionally do. Satan, who had been Lucifer, the greatest angel, and his compatriots warred against God. They were defeated and cast from Heaven into the fires of Hell.

Lying on the lake, Satan is described as gigantic; he is compared to a Titan or the Leviathan. Next to Satan lies Beelzebub, Satan's second in command. Satan comments on how Beelzebub has been transformed for the worse by the punishment of God. Still he adds that it is his intention to continue the struggle against God, saying, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (263).

With effort, Satan is able to free himself from his chains and rise from the fire. He flies to a barren plain, followed by Beelzebub. From the plain, Satan calls the other fallen angels to join him, and one by one they rise from the lake and fly to their leader. As they come, Milton is able to list the major devils that now occupy Hell: Moloch, Chemos, Baalem, Ashtaroth, Astarte, Astoreth, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus, Mammon, and Belial. Each devil is introduced in a formal cataloguing of demons. These fallen angels think that they have escaped from their chains through their own power, but Milton makes it clear that God alone has allowed them to do this.

This devil army is large and impressive but also aware of its recent ignominious defeat. Satan addresses them and rallies them. He tells them that they still have power and that their purpose will be to oppose God, adding, "War then, War / Open or understood, must be resolv'd" (661-62).

This speech inspires the devil host, and under Mammon's direction, they immediately begin work on a capital city for their Hellish empire. They find mineral resources in the mountains of Hell and quickly begin to construct a city. Under the direction of their architect, Mulciber, they construct a great tower that comes to symbolize the capital of Hell, Pandemonium. The devil army, flying this way and that, is compared to a great swarm of bees. When the work is done and the capital completed, they all assemble for the first great council.

Analysis

Milton begins Paradise Lost in the traditional epic manner with a prologue invoking the muse, in this case Urania, the Muse of Astronomy. He calls her the "Heav'nly Muse" (7) and says that he will sing "Of Man's First Disobedience" (1), the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace. As the prologue continues, it becomes apparent that this muse is more than just the classical Urania, but also a Christian muse who resides on Mt. Sinai, in fact the Holy Spirit. In these first lines, Milton thus draws on two traditions — the classical epic exemplified by Homer and Virgil and the Christian tradition embodied in the Bible as well as Dante's Divine Comedy and Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene.

Milton further emphasizes in the prologue that his theme will be Man's disobedience to God's will, implying not only Adam's disobedience, but all mankind from first to last. He does add that his subject will include the "greater Man" (4) who saved all others from the original disobedience. Moreover, his intention will be to "justify the ways of God to men" (26) through the aid of "Eternal Providence" (25). By "justify," Milton means more than simply to explain; he means that he will demonstrate that God's actions in regard to man are just. This goal suggests that Milton was not bothered by any sense of false modesty, an idea underscored by his statement that he will write in a high style and attempt a purpose never tried before. The one truly poignant line in this prologue is Milton's request of the muse, "What in me is dark / Illumine" (22 — 23), with its oblique reference to Milton's blindness, a subject he will return to more directly in the prologue that begins Book III. At no point in this prologue and invocation does Milton mention Satan, who, though he is the main character of the poem, is not the actual subject.

Following the invocation and prologue, Milton continues in the epic style by beginning in medias res, in the middle of things. Satan is first seen lying in the pit of Hell. That a great religious epic focuses on Satan, presents him first, and in many ways makes him

the hero of the poem is certainly surprising and something of a risk on Milton's part. Milton does not want his audience to empathize with Satan, yet Satan is an attractive character, struggling against great odds. Of course, Milton's original audience more than his modern one would have been cognizant of the ironies involved in Satan's struggles and his comments concerning power. The power that Satan asserts and thinks he has is illusory. His power to act derives only from God, and his struggle against God has already been lost. To the modern audience, Satan may seem heroic as he struggles to make a Heaven of Hell, but the original audience knew, and Milton's lines confirm, that Satan's war with God had been lost absolutely before the poem begins. God grants Satan and the other devils the power to act for God's purposes, not theirs.

Also, at this point in the narrative, Satan is at his most attractive. He has just fallen from Heaven where he was the closest angel to God. He has not completely lost the angelic aura that was his in Heaven. As the poem progresses, the reader will see that Satan's character and appearance grow worse. Milton has carefully structured his work to show the consequences of Satan's actions.

The catalogue of demons that follows Satan's escape from the burning lake follows an epic pattern of listing heroes — although here the list is of villains. This particular catalogue seems almost an intentional parody of Homer's catalogue of Greek ships and heroes in Book II of the Iliad. The catalogue is a means for Milton to list many of the fallen angels as well as a way to account for many of the gods in pagan religions — they were originally among the angels who rebelled from God. Consequently, among these fallen angels are names such as Isis, Osiris, Baal, and others that the reader associates not with Christianity but with some ancient, pagan belief. Of the devils listed, the two most important are Beelzebub and Belial. (For a complete description of each devil, see the List of Characters.)

The final part of Book I is the construction of Pandemonium, the capital of Hell. A certain unintentional humor pervades this section of Book I as well as Mammon's argument in Book II. In both cases, a sense of civic pride seems to overcome the devils, and they act on the idea that "Hell is bad, but with a few improvements we can make it lots better, even attractive." In both Mammon and the hellish architect, Mulciber, the attitude of the mayor whose small town has been bypassed by the Interstate comes out. They both seem to think that with improvements Hell may be nice enough that others may want to relocate.

Milton's real goal here, though, is to establish Hell's capital, Pandemonium — a word which Milton himself coined from the Latin pan (all) and demonium (demons). Thus, the capital of Hell is literally the place of all demons. With the passage of time, the word came to mean any place of wild disorder, noise, and confusion. This idea is subtly emphasized with Milton's choice of Mulciber as the architect. Mulciber was another name for Hephaestus, the Greek God of the Forge, who was tossed from Olympus by a drunken Zeus. Mulciber is consequently a figure of some ridicule and not the most likely architect to build a lasting monument.

One other aspect of the construction of Pandemonium is worth consideration. Mammon and the other devils find mineral resources including gemstones in their search for building materials. This discovery of resources suggests that the Hell Milton has imagined is a multifaceted place. In the first scene, as Satan and the others lie chained on the burning lake, Hell seems totally a place of fiery torture and ugliness. The construction of Pandemonium shows that there is more to Hell. Geographic features such as a plain and hill, mineral resources such as gemstones, and even the possibility for beauty seem to exist in Hell. Other aspects of Hell will be brought forward in later books. All in all, Milton depicts a Hell that has more than one essence, or, at least in the opening books, seems to.

Paradise Lost Book-I : Speeches of Satan

Introduction

Satan of Book-I Paradise Lost, is one of the glorious examples of political leadership and political oratory. His speeches are the key to his character and his art of oratory excels the best of Roman rhetoric. He is the leader of the rebel-angels in Heaven and the uncrowned monarch of Hell. By following his lead, the fallen angels are deprived of "happy fields, where joy forever dwells." Satan has now the task of retaining their loyalty and does so by the sheer magic of his high-pitched oratory. There is a certain pathetic grandeur of injured merit in them which wins the hearts of his followers. Around the character of Satan, Milton has thrown a singularity of daring, a grandeur of sufferance and a ruined splendour, which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity.

Satan is the first to recover from the stupor into which all the rebel angels fall. Soon he notices his first lieutenant, Beelzebub, weltering by his side. He finds that his compeer is much changed. So he makes a cautious approach, for he is not sure whether his friend is in a mood to blame him or he still loves him.

First Speech: "What though the field be lost…tyranny of Heaven."

The speech is an embodiment of Satan's resilience in face of a mortifying defeat. This rout, instead of humbling his aspiring pride has fuelled his design of usurpation and revenge against God. He's aghast at seeing the diminished glory of his minions, the fallen angels who revolted at his command. The deplorable state of Beelzebub and his lost lustre incites Satan to admonish him for his irresolute spirits and weak convictions. Satan in his speech ushers forth convincing arguments to dissuade the bleak hopelessness of his fallen angels. He accepts his defeat 'field be lost' but questions whether it has trampled his armaments of 'unconquerable will', 'study of revenge', 'immortal hate and courage!'

God's glory shall remain a pipe dream as Satan shant surrender to Him. Satan has faith in his strengths which cannot be suppressed by the 'wrath or might' of God Himself. His speech resounds with this consolation which is so convincing to Satan himself that he broaches to battle the Supreme again. He reprimands the cowardly stance of his army which smacks of ignominy far worse than their defeat itself. Satan deters his legion from pleading God's mercy and extolling His power. He mocks His clout as a mere façade aptly proved by God's apprehensions when Satan's mighty terror shook His sovereignty.

Satan assures his fallen cherubs that the fiery mettle of angels as ordained by their fate can never perish but remain immortal. And with the benefit of hindsight he along with his minions must rage another war against the 'tyranny of heaven' that they equal both in arms and in foresight. To war anew, Satan believes portends greater hope of victory and can turn out to be their coup. Satan wishes to execute this 'eternal war' by dint of 'force or guile' but for him the option of reconciling with God is closed sine die, as he's fervent in his convictions to overthrow the tyranny of heaven- God!

A critical Note: By Satan's vaunting of "All is not lost" one is compelled to wonder whether God's victory is a mere pyrrhic one, as He is unable to smother the soul, the ignition of Satan's rebellion which even after a crushing defeat still remains fervent in his spirits-'the unconquerable will, revenge, immortal hate and courage.' This ironic defeat or apparent victory of God provokes Satan to pervert God's holy plans such as instigating the lamentable fall of Adam and Eve.

Even in his last speech of Book-1, Satan sends this message to his legion that the supreme shall learn from his tactics of guile and deceit that he "who overcomes by force hath overcome but half his foe", which quite aptly explains the situation.

Second Speech: "Fallen cherub…resolution from despair"

Analysis: Beelzebub despite Satan's claims of victory after a 'sad overthrow and foul defeat' is tormented by the thought of eternal punishment. He confides to Satan his fear of God's 'vengeful ire' that only their painful suffering can satiate. Satan is quick to allay his apprehensions and without a note of fear in his speech paints his coward whimpering as contemptible. Whether they are coerced to suffer His errands or bear His punishments, 'to be weak is miserable'. Satan further instigates his fallen angel to flout God's high will and seek out evil undertakings as it shall be their 'sole delight.'

In this speech Satan displays his confirmed aversion towards God and defies His plan to' bring forth good' out of their sinister stratagems. Rather he proposes to blight such intention of God and seize upon any means of evil to derail His objectives and aggrieve him beyond measure. Satan wishes to consume malicious joy out of wrecking Almighty's 'destined aim.'

Satan's next lines of his speech further stamp his fortitude against distinct signs of despair and hopelessness. In these lines he's salvaging a break, an opportunity in 'the gloomy deep' to plan retaliation. To Beelzebub he lays bare the various opportunities which he presumes to be propitious to his plot. God, the angry victory, he claims has withdrawn His good angels-'ministers of vengeance' and so they have retreated back to the gates of heaven. The 'sulphurous hail' has ceased to blow, the 'fiery surge' emanating from the edges of heaven has drawn to a close, and the thunder has dissipated its shafts- this occasion could have resulted either because of God's disdain or His ire has been satiated for a while, but be that as it may 'Let us not slip the occasion'.

While still floating above the ebb and flow of the fiery waves, Satan glimpses a 'dreary plain' beyond the lake of fire. He commands his troop to fly towards the vantage ground- 'that seat of desolation' to repose awhile if any respite is feasible. Then reconvene their 'afflicted powers', in order to forge various ways to affront the Almighty, to make amends for the loss, and to triumph over 'this dire calamity'. Finally, he beckons his minions to salvage strength and support from faith, failing which learn and gain from despair a resilient resolve.

A critical Note: What Beelzebub fears is exactly what Satan is putting into practice. By contriving to play foul and offend Almighty, he's in fact obeying His high will, and as its endorsed in the text that only by the 'high permission of all-ruling heaven', which has kept him loose and unfettered, Satan is able to execute his 'dark designs.' That is to say he's in fact carrying out God's 'errands in the gloomy deep' to 'heap on himself damnation' without truly knowing it. This is Beelzebub's apprehension of the eternal punishment which Satan's believes he has overcome by his wits.

Third Speech: "Is the region, this is the soil…what more lost in Hell?"

In this speech lies the key to Satan's dogged tenacity against God and His instruments of eternal punishment. Satan invokes every ounce of his strength to withstand his antagonists and uses firm reasoning to wake up his dispirited angels from the slough of despondency. Many have referred to his reasoning as 'satanic logic' which though connected to such an infamous personage, yet bears relevance in our daily lives.

Satan in a rhetorical fashion comes to term with his new abode and the deprivation of Heaven-'this mournful gloom for that celestial light', and accepts his fate with profound

indifference as if the odds aren't that formidable as they seem. He asserts that God 'who now is Sovran', has the prerogative to execute what He considers right; yet as we are far away from His dominion, this should serve as our consolation in this misery. This 'Sovran' if we measure by the yardstick of reason shall find us as His equals, and only due to His power-'whom thunder hath made greater?' does He claim authority.

Satan confronts his present predicament and bids farewell to the 'happy fields'. Welcoming the 'infernal abode' as its new sovereign, he proclaims that his mind, his spirits, his convictions shall remain undeterred even at the prospect of changing 'place or time'. He explains his logic by asserting that mind can envisage the torments of hell as the pleasant bliss of heaven or can imagine heaven as a seat of gloom -'Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven'. Such is the strength of mind that it drives Satan to persevere in his pursuit of revenge, without any regard to his greatest nemesis.

Satan pictures his dilemma as a boon in disguise because hell shall offer a breeding ground for their evil escapades and as God cannot expel them out of it or purge hell of its 'new possessor' – they 'may reign secure'. His single-minded aim is to be in power, to govern, to reign and his such resolution eclipses the miserable despair he has been plunged into- 'To reign is worth ambition, though in hell…than serve in heaven'.

With such sense of autonomy, Satan invigorates the beleaguered spirits of his 'associates' to partake each other's grief and once again join forces to recoup from heaven what their might is capable of, or on the flip side be deprived of what is still left of hell.

A critical Note: It is interesting to observe the shrewdness of Satan, when he dictates 'we may reign secure', 'we' on the face of it, might denote Satan and his troop but its connotations are obviously pertaining to the sole monarchy of Satan himself. Perhaps he knows there can be only one sun in the firmament (Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare). Such is the convincing sway of his rhetorical reasoning that hardly his minions can see through his design. His persuasive art is further attested by the mortal rebellion his legion waged and for him ' have their lot in pain'- The same sentiment I read in the words of Mephistopheles, ''unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer, conspir'd against our god with Lucifer, and are forever damn'd with Lucifer' (Doctor Faustus, Marlowe). Satan hence can be regarded as the epitome of cunning politicians and wining speakers.

Fourth speech: "Princes, Potentates…be forever fallen!"

Satan in this speech tolls the final knell of his legions' apprehensions and numbed spirits. He summons his army with noble epithets as Princes, Potentates, Warriors, which is enough to massage their ego and obliterate their melancholic dispositions.

He commands them to accept the bereavement of heaven because their cowardly visage doesn't become 'eternal spirits', nor is it befitting of them to rest their beaten heroism in this gloomy place. Their current milieu shall not be as soothing and peaceful as it would have been in 'the happy fields'.

He further attacks their wretched and humble stoop, by which they have apparently vowed to revere the God Almighty. God is, as Satan claims planning to ambush and quash them in their slumped posture. And finding it as an advantage His henchmen with their 'thunderbolts' shall spellbind all of them to the underbelly of this gloomy chasm. Hence, Satan's final cry- "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen!"

A critical note: Satan sure knows his way around the angels as he quite shrewdly concocts panic alarms to make them subservient to his will, if they wish to survive the looming danger. He strikes a balance in his extol and condemnation of the angels and

makes them believe if they don't arise, they shall be forever fallen. This 'forever fallen' however, is their irrevocable fate which can't be obscured whether they arise or remain 'in this abject posture'.

Fifth speech: "O myriads of immortal spirits…must be resolved."

Satan has successfully wrenched the 'fellows of his crime' out of their regretful stance. Seeing their absolute obedience, in face of overwhelming pains, Satan is conquered by tears and tries to confront their mutual loss- 'amerced of heaven'. His pride falls meek as he mourns and sighs for their cataclysmic defeat, yet he remains sane enough to dispute the cause of their fall. Satan reinforces in their minds that though their defeat shall be counted as a calamity for its done untold damage to them, it yet cannot be rendered as a dishonorable event.

One would have doubted the very omen of their rout for his legion is a union of gods themselves. As if this doesn't sound preposterous enough, the more perplexing is the helplessness of these mighty gods to regain their 'native seat' in heaven. Satan apprehends the cause of their defeat which he presumes either could be the conflicting counsels among the angels or his dread of danger that made him shrink away from the revolt at hand.

Finding these self-accusations unfounded, Satan reprehends Almighty for keeping his supreme power under wraps, which seduced him to challenge God's might-'tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall'. God might have achieved his stature as a monarch either by old repute, consent or custom, but had He abjured displaying royal pomp, and not concealed his strength, Satan and his minions wouldn't have undertaken such a drastic crusade.

Satan appeases his legion to look at the bright side of their defeat, for with benefit of hindsight they are now conscious of Almighty's power and their own. As his reasoning suggests it would be futile to declare an open war with Him yet again, so the only course of combat is –'to work in close design, by fraud or guile'. If they resort to force, their battle shall be half won as Satan's reasoning suggests and so the combative maneuvers shall be underhanded intrigues and furtive treacheries.

To begin their stealthy warfare, Satan mentions the report of God fostering a new generation, which shall be lavished with favours reserved for Sons of Heaven. Their first expedition shall be to inquire of God's holy plan and in such a pursuit hell shant hold divine spirits captive, nor the abyss teeming with darkness, blind their motives.

Satan calls for a profound deliberation on this matter, and urges his army to forswear the dreams of harmony as the price to gain it is slavish submission. Hence he hails war and advocates its resolution.

A critical Note: Satan is desperate to go at lengths and sacrifice his followers for his ambition. As his methods of warfare change, one gets an insight into his degenerating self. From glorious battles, he is shifting to despicable tactics of covert intrigues and deceit. Instead of fighting God like a true warrior, Satan is scheming to pervert God's creations that had no role in his downfall. His change of heart marks his collapse from an angelic Lucifer to a wicked Satan.

Next interesting point Of Satan's speech is his belief that peace demands absolute submission. This if read in modern times, suggests the sacrifice of media, capitalism, and individual sovereignty to the diktats of authority. Surely, this perspective shall find many takers but I believe peace doesn't entertain an authority in the first place. It can entail

the freedom of an individual to give voice to his opinions and let the other fellow contest it with rational justifications.

And if the former is proved wrong, instead of hanging him, lawful penalty can be meted out as per the degree of his falsehood. The case shouldn't become a deterrent for people to leash their thoughts but be an example of how to avoid indecent practices as perjury, outrageous slander, and scandals etc.

Satan if had not chosen insurgence as a tool to question God's tyranny, but a peaceful discourse, then world would have been different. But then again, Satan's avaricious ambition to oust God from his stature, strove him to forgo peaceful measures, and finally exclaim 'Peace is despaired, for who can think submission.'

Conclusion

Thus in five speeches Satan finishes his primary manipulation in the first book of Paradise Lost. In doing so, he has used rhetorical devices in his speeches, so that they may appear logical to his followers, because they have a good deal of deception in their very nature. So much in manner kingly, or like a politician he tries to manipulate the rebel angels that their state is not so despairing as not to wage another war against God, and indeed he succeeds in this pursuit by the aid of his eloquence and tricky speeches. It can be said that it is his speech that makes him become more Satanic, because whenever he talks he talks evil, as if vomiting out all the disease he has inside him, consequently inflicting the multitude that stands in front.

Major themes in "Paradise Lost"

Milton's subject in Paradise Lost was the failure of human kind to live according to divine order and its slow deliverance (God-given) from the consequences of the fall. The myth with which he chose to deal, and in which he believed literally, was, like many other parallel myths and folktales, and exploration of the moral consequences of disobedience. The discovery of the knowledge of good and evil is neither accidental nor happy. The central character Adam has no heroic destiny. Through Eve's corruption all humankind is corrupted and as both are finally obliged to understand, the spiritual struggle to regain paradise equity and equability (self-control) extends through each generation their descendants. In a profound sense Adam and Eve fall from the ideal into the human condition. The great theme of the poem is obedience to a creative order of an omnipotent God. The will of God is imprinted in the harmony of nature, and disaster of the fall is as ecological as it is moral. Despite the temptation we see the rebellion of Satan as a heroic gesture of liberation and the fall of Adam as a species of attentiveness towards his wife, Paradise Lost insistently attempts to assert the ultimate justness of a loving God's 'Eternal Providence.'

Milton's Paradise Lost God is powerful; He creates man from his own image. They were in Eden and Satan live in Hell. Satan revolted against the God and challenged the authority of God so sent in the Hell. Adam is lesser than angels; Eve is created as Adam's partner. They were sent on the paradise in Eden Garden and said that please don't go near to this tree of knowledge and prohibited to eat the fruit of knowledge. But they committed the sin to eat that prohibited fruit. It is in conman human nature, that if someone said that it is prohibited thing than we attract to do that thing. Eve was tempted by Satan because Satan wants to take revenge with God and he knows very well that if he wants to take revenge with God he has to harm His creation. As he is not able to harm him directly he tempts Eve ate that apple and for love of Eve Adam ate that apple willingly and in conscious manner. Knowledge makes man more unnatural, when

both ate that apple they came know about the good and evil, sexuality and other things. In Paradise Lost, Milton has used many themes to write further about the epic. But main theme of Paradise Lost is Disobedience of Adam and Eve. The purpose of Paradise Lost is religious and has three parts (1) Disobedience (2) Eternal providence (3) Justification of God to men.

Disobedience:- The first part of Milton's arguments hinges on the disobedience and its opposite obedience. The universe that Milton imagined with heaven at the top hell at the bottom and earth in between is a hierarchical place. God literally sits on the thrown at the top of Heaven Angels are arranged in groups according to their proximity to God. On the Earth Adam is superior to Eve humans rule over animals. Even in the Hell, Satan sits on a thrown, higher than demons. The proper way of the world was for inferiors to obey superiors because superiors well superior. A king was not because he was chosen but he was superior to his subject. It was therefore, not just proper to obey the kind was merely required. Satan's rebellion because of jealousy is the first great act of disobedience and commences all that happens in the epic.

The crucial moment in the poem results from the disobedience and a breakdown of hierarchy. Eve argues with Adam about whether they should work together or apart. The problem here lies with both humans. Eve should not argue with her superior, Adam, but like arise, Adam should not yield his authority to his inferior, Eve. Likewise, when Adam also eats the fruit, he disobeys the God. Further, he disobeys by knowingly putting Eve ahead of God. Disobedience and disruption of the correct order result in sin and death.

Justification of ways of God to Man: - Eternal providence moves the story to a difference level. Without the fall, this divine love would never have been demonstrated because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. By obeying God, he can achieve salvation. The fall actually produces a new and higher love from God to Man.

Eve's revolt: - There is an argument between Adam and Eve for Division of work. Adam insists that Eve should be closed to him and they have work together. Eve wants to work independently without Adams supervision. She wants to ;live independent life. **"If so near.....good works in her husband to promote"**

She furthers her argument saying that their presents are barrier to their work assign by God. Adam tries to pursuit Eve not to part from him because they have threat to their live from the enemy. But Eve is not convinced by the argument and ultimately decides to part from Adam.

Stan's Revolt: - His revolt for God because is disobeying Him. He speaks against God so he was punished and thrown into the Hell. He knows that he is not capable to take revenge with God so he harms the creation of God. Satan takes the advantage of Eve and Adam's separation. He seduces Eve in the form of serpent. Satan enters in Eden garden unobserved during midnight to take revenge against God. Satan's motto is to destroy the creation of God.

John Milton's Grand Style

In his Oxford lecture 'On Translating Homer: Last Words', Mathew Arnold used this now famous phrase. 'Such a style, he maintained, arises when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject'. Arnold refers to Homer, Pindar, Virgil, Dante, and Milton as exponents of grand style. It was a lofty or elevated style suitable for epic, a style Arnold himself attempted in, for instance in 'Sohrab and Rustum'.

Now, we discuss the devices used in 'Paradise Lost' by Milton which have caused his style to be characterized as the Grand Style.

Erudite Style, Full of Allusion: - The language of 'Paradise Lost' is that of a scholar writing for scholars. A beautiful illustration of the poet's fondness for allusions is provided by his description of Satan's forces, which dwarfed the mightiest armies known to history or legend:

- the giant brood mentioned by Hesiod
- the heroic race that fought at Thebes and Troy mentioned by Homer
- the knights of king Arthur mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth
- the Crusaders who fought the Saracens mentioned in history, and
- the warriors of Charlemagne mentioned in the Italian epics.

The whole treasury of poetry and the whole storehouse of learning are at his command.

Suggestive Quality in Style: - In Milton's poetry more is meant than meets the ear. He means more than what he says. As the poet's difficulty throughout the poem is to describe what cannot be exactly described—Heaven, Chaos, Hell, God, Angels, Devils-he throws out a broad hint or two of their intended shapes and appearance and asks the reader to imagine the rest. Thus Satan's huge figure, which nobody can have an idea of, is described with a few suggestive strokes: 'head uplift above the wave', 'eyes that sparkling blazed', and other parts in bulk as large 'as whom the fables name of monstrous size'. Hell is described

As one great furnace flam'd: yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible........
Oh how unlike the place from whence they fell.

We have to suggest a lot to form a whole picture of the Hell.

Unusual Structure of Sentences: - Milton's common practice is to place a noun between its two qualifying adjectives, though the English grammar requires both to be placed before the noun: the upright heart and pure', 'the dismal situation waste and wild', 'ever burning sulpher unconsumed'. Sometimes he uses one part of speech for another, such as verb as noun in 'the great consult began'; adjective as noun 'the palpable obscure' etc. In spite of the violation of the accepted rules of grammar, one cannot deny that 'Paradise Lost' is a poem for scholarly readers. The violation of grammar is not so much criticized as the beauty of his style is appreciated.

Use of Similes: - A striking feature in 'Paradise Lost' is Milton's use of similes. These are expanded to draw complete pictures. They had dignity of the narrative, and do not merely illustrate but also decorate the epic theme and character.

Elevated Speeches: - The lofty tone is maintained in the speeches of Satan, as for instance in the speech to Beelzebub. One cannot help noting the rhetorical eloquence with which Satan encourages the fallen angels.

Conclusion: - Milton maintains a constant elevation and dignity of style corresponding to the greatness of theme, and Mathew Arnold is absolutely right when he

refers to Milton as a poet of grand style. Thus vocabulary sentence, imagery, allusion, Latinisms all mingle and unite to form the majestic garment of Milton's thought and feelings.

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next, in majesty; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no further go.
To make a third, she joined the former two."

Paradise Lost: Milton's Use of Epic Similes

Epic similes are used in literary works to create elaborate comparisons beyond the original point of similarity Milton uses a number of epic similes in his poem Paradise Lost. As Harding suggests in his article "Milton's Bee-Simile," Milton could have used epic similes in order to raise his poetry to the level of his Greek predecessors. The similes create sympathy for the characters by comparing Satan and the fallen angels to objects and creatures that reduce their severity. As Paradise Lost progresses, Milton's use of epic similes gradually diminishes those that they describe, making the reader more sympathetic to Satan and the Fallen Angels as well as aligning humanity to the fallen characters.

The Greek poet Homer is thought to have originated the epic simile in his poem The Iliad, to which we can make connections to Milton. Milton's bee-simile is an excellent example of a "shared" epic simile between Homer and Milton. There are various functions of Milton's epic similes: foreshadow, exaggeration, emotion / intellectual functions, aesthetic, relief and illustrative. The first simile in which something greater is happening is that when Satan is compared to the sun. Milton's comparison of Satan to the sun is not as straightforward. A "sun new risen" often represents light, life, and all that is good. If the sun represents good and Satan embodies evil, then why does Milton align the two? This is the first instance where Satan appears sympathetic. We become entranced with Satan's character as something alike the goodness of the sun, causing us to create sympathy for him, his angels, and his mission.

Milton often uses epic similes in his descriptions of the Fallen Angels that create sympathy for these sunken characters. Milton compares the fallen angels to fallen leaves. The image Milton creates with this simile is extremely depressing and shows just how far the angels have fallen from their previous glory. Like the leaves from the trees, the angels too have fallen and are strewn about in hell; they are lifeless and piled on top of each other.

Just lines after the fallen leaves simile, Milton compares the Fallen Angels to a swarm of locusts, further instilling the reader's sympathy in the fallen characters. The leaves simile portrays the Fallen Angels as pathetic, fallen beings who are strewn on top of the Earth. The locust simile is unsettling and creates sympathy in a different way than the leaves simile. The reader's initial impulse could be that locusts are evil due to various biblical implications. The movement in the locust simile suggests that the angels have become restless in anticipation for Satan's plan of action. This image of the angels swarming their leader, trapped in unfamiliar bodies, creates a great deal of sympathy.

Milton also uses epic similes to compare Satan to various creatures and with each comparison Satan becomes further diminished. The first epic simile of Satan is found in book one and compares Satan to a large sea monster known as the Leviathan. The

Leviathan is referenced many times in the Bible. The Leviathan, like Satan, also takes form as a giant serpent. This comparison foreshadows Satan's last state of existence in Paradise Lost when he appears as a serpent in books nine and ten. Satan as the Levitation is a disturbing image. In the Bible, the Leviathan is large, has many heads, and dwells in the sea. This simile implies Satan's power and fury as the angels awaken to find they have fallen into hell. Milton does not create any sympathy for Satan in this first simile. Milton offers another simile of Satan in book one that describes him as a sympathetic leader. Although this simile comes not far after the Leviathan simile, there is a drastic difference in how Satan is described. Milton writes,

He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tower; his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined and the excess
Of glory obscured, as when the sun new arisen (Milton 1.589-594).

This is the first simile in which we see Milton's attempt to create sympathy for the fallen characters. Before this he was compared to a giant sea monster, here Satan is likened to solar eclipse. Milton writes that Satan is "shorn of his beams/or from the behind the moon/in dim eclipse" (Milton 1.596-97) Satan is compared to the sun trapped behind the moon. In a solar eclipse, one can only see the outer rays of the sun protruding from behind the moon's shadow.

In book nine, back in Paradise, we see Satan's transformation. Satan says,

"O foul descent, that I who erst contended/
With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained/
Into a beast and mixed with bestial slime/
This essence to incarnate and imbrute/…
But what will not ambition and revenge/ Descend to?" (Milton IX.163-69).

We see that Satan has become aware of his "imbrutement." What makes this transformation sympathetic is how little Satan has learned after his fall. To end his speech Satan says, "spite when with spite is best repaid" (Milton IX.177). Satan's disfigurement has only convinced him further that "Who aspires must down as low as high he soared"(Milton IX169-70). Milton wonders why he is being punished for his ambition rather than recognizing his own evils.

Milton's similes bring sympathy and understanding to those characters that they describe and also align the characters within the comparisons to humankind. Satan begins his journey as an angel in heaven, and ends his journey as a tormenting serpent. As Satan digresses, he becomes more concrete. We see Adam and Eve follow a similar path. Before the fall, man and woman are unfamiliar because their lives are surrounded by perfection and bliss. Once they have fallen, they experience emotions that are easier for us to understand: lust, jealously, revenge. The further Satan falls from heaven, the closer he becomes to humankind and the further Adam and Eve fall, the closer they become to Satan. We cannot picture Satan atop a tree, perched as a large bird or Satan whispering temptation into Eve's ear as a toad. These comparisons are what make Satan relatable; they make Satan more than an angel dispelled from heaven. Satan becomes earthly, sympathetic, and arguably more human. In this context, one should remember Addison's famous observation about the essential characteristic of Milton's epic similes:

"When Milton eludes either to things or persons he never quits his similes until it rises to some very great idea, which is often foreign to the occasions that

gave birth to. He runs on with the idea till he has raised out of it some glorious image to inflame the mind of the readers and to give it that sublime kind of entertainment which is suitable to the nature of a heroic poem".

Paradise Lost as a Classical Epic

An epic is a long narrative poem, ordinarily concerning a serious subject containing details of heroic deeds and events significant to a culture or nation. Homer and Virgil were the two great masters of the Classical epic. Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid have invariably served as models for all writers of the classical epic. Milton was a great classical scholar and he sought to write an epic. He dreamt of immortality and he aspired to be one with Homer and Virgil as the author of a classical epic. Milton turned his great classical and Biblical learning to a poem to "assert eternal providence, and justify the ways of God to men".

"I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

Milton achieved eminent success in making Paradise Lost as classical epic. In spite of certain drawbacks and defects, Milton's epic is entitled to take its rightful place among half a dozen classical epics in the world. **The first essential feature of the epic is its theme**. The theme of an epic must have a national importance or significance; that is, the epic must be a true and faithful mirror of the life and of a nation. Homer represented the national life, thought and culture of the Greeks in the Iliad, and Virgil gave expression to the hopes and aspirations of the Romans in the Aeneid. The Fall of Man is the theme of the epic.

"Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,"

The epic action has three qualifications. First, it should be one action, secondly, it should be an entire action, and thirdly, it should be a great action. In short, **the action of an epic should be one, entire and great**. All these three qualities of epic action are followed by Milton.

The action of Paradise Lost is one and there is a **unity of action**. The central action is the Fall of Man, and everything in the epic as, the battle of angels, the creation of the world, is subordinated to this central action. There are digressions at the beginning of the third and seventh books, but they do not affect the unity and central action of the poem. The whole action of Paradise Lost is single and compact. In the second place, its action is entire which means that it has a beginning, middle and an end. The action in Paradise Lost is contrived in hell, executed upon earth, and punished by heaven. In the third place the action ought to be great, by greatness of the action, Aristotle means that it should not only be great in its nature but also in its duration. The entire action of Paradise Lost has a stamp of grandeur and greatness about it. Milton's subject is greater than Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid. It does not determine the fate of one single person or nation; but of the whole human race.

Milton plunges into the middle of the action. Milton, in imitation of the great poets, opens his Paradise Lost, with an infernal council plotting the fall of man.

The **characters of the epic must have dignity and variety**. In Paradise Lost, we have a wide variety of characters marked with qualities. In Paradise Lost, we have human as well as superhuman characters. Adams and Eve are human characters, whereas God, Christ and Satan are superhuman characters.

An **epic must have a hero with great qualities**. Identification of the hero is different in Paradise Lost. Adam can be called the hero of the epic. He is not a warrior or a conqueror but a noble figure.

An epic is a **serious poem embodying sublime and nobler thoughts**. Milton's Paradise Lost is a sublime and noble poem characterized by loftiness of thought and sentiment.

An epic is **not without a moral**. Moral forms an integral and intrinsic part in Milton's poem. It seeks to "vindicate the ways of God to man, to show the reasonableness of religion and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law".

Milton, in conformity with the epic practice, begins Paradise Lost by **invoking the Muse** to help him in his great task. But since Milton seeks the aid of the Heavenly Muse, the Holy spirit,

"And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st:"

He requests:

"- -: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,"

In an epic poem the poet narrates very little in his person. The characters themselves carry forward the mission of the poet.

Lastly the **language of an epic** must be sublime and rose above the language of common vernacular.

"- What though the fields be lost?
All is not lost"

Aristotle observes that a **sublime style** can be formed by three methods - by the use of metaphors, by making use of the idioms and by lengthening of the phrase by the addition of words. Milton employs all these three methods to give the air of grandeur to his epic. His similes and metaphors are epical. Latin words are frequently introduced. The style of Paradise Lost is the truest example of grand style. On one place, Satan says:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n"

On the other place:

"Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

Milton's Paradise Lost is a successful classical epic. Paradise lost has thus many excellences as an epic but the defects in it also not be forgotten. The introduction of allegorical persons like sin and death, the frequent allusions to heathen mythological fables, the intervention of grotesque incidents, the frequent indulgence in puns and useless display of learning and the unnecessary use of technical terms as in the description of Pandemonium are some blemishes in the style of the poem.

One other point must also be noted. An epic is an objective poem, and personal

reflections are out of place in it. But the most sublime parts of Paradise Lost reflect the individuality of the poet. However this has added to the interest of the work as a poem though it is not, strictly speaking, permissible in an epic.

The Theme & Moral Purpose of "Paradise Lost" Book-I

Introduction: - An epic worthy of the name should deal with an action or story which has universal or even cosmic appeal. All epics of antiquity deal with personalities and events of divine or superhuman dimensions. The Iliad dealt with Gods and heroes, lovely women and romantic lovers, doughty deeds on the battle-field and heroic achievements and death. But the ancient epics dealt with men and events which we know could not have happened as described. Much of it is pure imagination, much of it is fantastic or incredible and many other parts are beyond human agencies. They help us to realise that we are surrounded by invisible powers which can shape us to some extent, and which exert a continuous influence over us for good and ill. Faith in God and a divine order is thus inculcated, and we do not feel as strangers or helpless beings in this world. Death is the final end of all mortal men. But before death comes, we are impelled to do something worthy of our higher natures so that it may remain as an object of inspiration to all mankind. Thus, epics give us delight, instruction, edification and consolation.

Milton's Subject: Fall of Man: - Milton was a profound student of the classics, and from a very early period of his life, he was seized with the ambition to write an epic poem. But the course of his life was chequered by many interests, conflicts and crosses which prevented him from taking up the work on which he kept on brooding. At last he hit upon the subject of the fall of Man as narrated in the Bible as a fit theme for his epic, and planned and completed his Paradise Lost. The actual story of Adam and Eve, of their blissful state of innocence in paradise and the manner of their fall from it is very briefly narrated in the Genesis. Taking it as the kernel of his work, he decided to enrich it in all possible ways with the resources of his poetical faculties, his wide knowledge, learning and scholarship. Coleridge commenting on the theme of Paradise Lost said:

"It represents origin of evil and the combat of evil and good, it contains matter of deep interest to all mankind, as forming the basis of all religion and the true occasion of all philosophy whatsoever."

The fall of man is a subject of **universal interest**. Unlike other epics of ancient times, he could treat it in such a way as to ring conviction to the modern mind. But as mythology is a very essential aspect of all epics, he decided to make use of all his classical lore to embellish and illustrate his own narrative. As an epic should provide for the free play of all the nova rasas as we call them, he developed a plot which provided scope for them in ample measure. Biblical history is a part of the Sematic racial heritage; and the ancient Hebrews had come into contact with the pre-classical body of knowledge which goes back to a much more ancient past than that of ancient Greece and Rome. At the same time, according to the Christian religion, all mankind has been cursed as a result of the disobedience and fall of Man. Also that religion connects it with the coming of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind from the sin of which Adam and Eve were guilty. A.C. George states:

"We can state the essential theme of Paradise Lost as the sustained opposition between love and hate, God responds to the destructive challenge of Satan with the creative expression of love." "Milton has combined two traditional elements - the story of the challenge and response through an indirect agent. The former theme is the direct physical conflict of the Celestial Battle, and the latter is Satan's challenge of God-indirectly through God's own creature man. The second theme arises out of the first."

Another interpretation is that the theme of Paradise Lost is "**the Fall of Man**" from Paradise on account of his sin. Milton has tried to show that **every action of man has its consequences**. His principal concern is that man must make the right use of every moment of life because his actions are irrevocable. Milton's object in this poem was also to emphasize the role of Christ as the Redeemer of mankind and to justify the ways of God to men.

The **doctrine of Free Will** has been insisted on by Milton frequently and emphatically. The kind of action or state of mind Milton felt desirable was one perfectly controlled by the conscious will. Any deed, however significant, performed instinctively or without the full significance of the issue realized, was of little value. Milton has not condemned the element of desire in human nature but the difference between love that is genuine and passion that is not controlled by reason has been brought out.

God's Pity on Mankind: - As **every sin has to be punished** so was it the lot of mankind to suffer death although they had been promised immortality by God. But God himself took pity on mankind after a time, and resolved to come down in human shape to save men from hell and death. So Christ is represented as the Son of God, according to Christian belief, who came on earth and suffered Himself to be crucified, thus taking on himself the sin of mankind. This is known as the doctrine of vicarious suffering. God as man, suffered despite being pure and guiltless. By following Christ men were thus giving a chance of regaining their lost Paradise. This is the main topic which Milton has elaborated in his two great epics called Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The first deals with the entire story of the Universe from the moment of the creation of the world and of Adam and Eve, down to the disobedience of Adam tempted by Satan.

Two Groups of Angels: - To explain how Satan came to be an evil spirit, we have another mythological story of how there was formerly great war between one group of angels devoted to God and another group of angels led by Lucifer who wished to overthrow God so that he himself might become the most supreme of spirits, in the end, Lucifer was defeated and hurled down by God with all his hosts into a bottomless pit there to suffer for ever. But Lucifer, thereafter called Satan rankled in his defeat and planned to seek revenge against the Almighty. On hearing that God had created Man to take the place of the fallen angels, he decided to tempt him and wean him away from God. He found an opportunity to do so, since God put Adam and Eve in Paradise and gave him the lordship of all creation with one exception alone. This was that they should not taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge which grew in Eden.

Satan seized the opening, and after recognising his shattered hosts and placing them in suitable dwellings in Hell, came out, and taking the form of a serpent, entered Eden and caused the fall of both Adam and Eve by persuading Eve to eat the fruit of knowledge. With knowledge, Adam and Eve lost their innocence, and God cursed them not only with the loss of their immorality and happiness but also drove them out of Eden to wander over the earth and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

Various Episodes: -Into this main Biblical story, Milton has woven many episodes, drawn from the entire range of ancient lore to give his poem both substance, bulk and shape and impressive majesty and sublimity.

Vastness of the Theme: - Critics have admired Milton's courage in dealing with the universal subject. The scene of action is the universal space; time is represented by eternity. The characters are God and His creation. The epic deals with the fortunes of the whole human race and not of a particular country and nation.

The Problem of Evil: The Conflict between Good and Evil: - The problem of evil is a very old subject. Philosophers have given different views regarding the origin of

the evil. Some regarded it as something external. Others regarded it as something eternal. For Satan, evil is the disobedience of the order of God. It is the will of the Man asserting himself. In fact, Satan brought freedom to Man. He gave consciousness of personality to Man. Man began to act with free choice and judgement. Now this freedom meant facing the consequences of one's choice. Adam and Eve have, therefore, to leave paradise because they followed their own free will. Milton condemned the act of Man. He did not appreciate man's free will and judgement because he was a very strict Puritan. His stress was on the results of the evil which led man to his ruin.

Some critics feel that there are two themes which are quite balanced, namely, the Fall of Angels and Fall of Man. The first half deals with Satan's efforts to do something against God. The second half is the drama of Adam and Eve. But this cannot be accepted. Milton clearly said that his story dealt with the Fall of Man. Satan's story is subsidiary to the main story of Adam and Eve.

Milton's Failure to Justify the Ways of God to Man: - Some critics believe that the poet instead justifies the ways of Satan to men, he has not justified the ways of god on the poetic level. Milton has tried to do so through arguments which are unconvincing. Moreover, the punishment given to Adam and Eve is out of proportion to their sin of disobedience. Hanford points out that the justification of divine ways lies in the representation of Adam as a free agent and in the revelation of the working of God's Grace which allows to him and his descendants the opportunity for a new exercise of moral choice and of consequent salvation even after the Fall. The poet has gone out of his way again and again to insist on the fact of Adam's freedom. Neither personally nor as a part of the system did the idea greatly move or interest him.

Poetic Justice: - The theme of the epic is the justification of "God's ways to Man. "Milton justified the punishment of Adam and Eve for the crime they committed. They are expelled from Paradise. However, Milton is not a pessimist. He believe in spiritual development from Hope to Faith. God through His Goodness redeems man from sin. His son namely Christ offers his own sacrifice for the sake of Adam and Eve. At the end of the Paradise Lost, Adam and Eve feel repentant. They are punished in Heaven by God through the angel named Michael. David Daiches states: **"Milton's heart was not fully in this sort of justification. Whatever he might have consciously thought."**

However, he adds that the true justification lies in the way in that virtue can only be achieved by struggle, that the Fall was inevitable because a passive and ignorant virtue, with the challenge of an imperfect world, cannot release the true potentialities of human greatness.

Conclusion: - Milton's Puritanism and his great faith in the Bible made him choose his subject which was of interest to all men. His great achievement lies in making such a serious subject which is agreeable and acceptable to all. In fact, his sublimity (greatness and grandeur) can only be maintained at high level on a very lofty subject,

Character of "Satan"

Satan occupies the most prominent position in the action of Paradise Lost. Though the main theme of the poem is the “Man’s first disobedience” yet it is the character of Satan which gives a touch of greatness to this epic. All the poetic powers of Milton are shown on the delineation of the majestic personality of the enemy of God and Man, i.e. Satan.

As it is shown in Paradise Lost Book-I that the character of Satan is a **blend of the noble and the ignoble, the exalted and the mean, the great and the low**, therefore, it becomes difficult to declare him either a hero or a wholly villain.

In Paradise Lost Book-I we can hardly doubt his **heroic qualities** because this book fully exhibits his exemplary will-power, unsurpassable determination, unshakable confidence and unbelievable courage. However, the encyclopaedia of religion removes some of the confusion from our minds regarding Satan's character in the following words:

"Satan means the arch-enemy of men, the adversary of God and of Christianity, a rebel against God, a lost arch-angle."

Milton also confirms the remarks and tells us that Satan is an archangel. When God declares the Holy Christ his viceroy, Satan refuses to accept God's order because he himself is a confident for it, his false strength and pride leads him to revolt against God for the fulfillment of his lust for power but he and his army suffers a heavy defeat and throw headlong into the pit of hell.

Milton's description of Satan's huge physical dimension, the heavy arms he carries, his tower like personality and his gesture make him every inch a hero. In his first speech, Satan tells Beelzebub that he does not repent of what he did and that defeat has brought no change in him at all. He utters memorable lines:

"What though the field be lost?
All is not lost – the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield."

Actually he is not ready to bow before the will of God and is determined to wade and eternal war by force and will never compromise. He proudly calls himself the new possessor of the profoundest hell and foolishly claims to have a mind never to be changed by force or time. As he says:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

Although Satan undergoes perpetual mental and physical torture in hell yet he is fully satisfied because he is at liberty to do whatever he likes, without any restriction. The following line clearly indicates his concept of freedom.

"Better to reign in Hell, the Serve in Heaven."

It can be said without any doubt that Satan gives an evidence of great leadership qualities which are certainly worthy of an epic hero and Beelzebub appreciates him for his undaunted virtues as the commander of undaunted virtue as the commander of fallen angels. His speech to the fallen angels is a sole roof of his great leadership because it infuses a new spirit in the defeated angels who come out of the pit of hill with their swords and are ready to face any danger regardless of their crushing and humiliating defeat at the hands of God. We fully laud Satan's views on the themes of honour, revenge and freedom, but we cannot help sympathizing him because he embodies evil. He is the embodiment of disobedience to God.

As the poem proceeds, the character of Satan degenerates and he fails to produce any impression to true heroism because he is morally a degraded figure. When we closely examine his addressed to his followers, we find that it is full of contradictions and absurdities, because he tries to throw dust into the eyes of his comrades. In fact, on the one hand, he says that they will provoke war against God and on the other hand, he wants peace which is only possible through submission. Then, on reaching the earth, he enters into a serpent and is completely degrades. Pride is the cause of his fall from Heaven – Pride that has 'raised' him to contend with the mightiest. But where is that

pride when the Archangel enters into the mouth of a sleeping serpent and hides himself in its "Mazy folds". Here from the grand figure that he is in the beginning, he degenerates into a man and cunning fellow, and then he tries to tempt Eve by guile. So, Satan degenerates from the role of a brave hero to that of a cunning villain as C. S. Lewis remarks:

"From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bed-room or bath-room window and thence toad, and finally to a snake – such is the progress of Satan."

So, it can easily be said in the light of above mentioned facts that Satan is out and pouter hero in Book-I of Paradise Lost, but in Book-IX he appears before us every inch a villain because of his evil design and he himself says that his chief pleasure lies in the destruction of mankind which lowers him in our estimation as a hero.

The Influence of Reformation and Renaissance on Milton

Introduction: - The Renaissance and the Reformation had their impact on England in the sixteenth century. Milton's work reflects the influence of both the Reformation and the Renaissance. He homogenised Reformation and Renaissance into a perfect whole. When he started writing, the initial exuberance ushered in by the Renaissance and the Reformation was already on its way out. His poetry is the first and the last example of the happy and effortless harmonisation of the two mutually antagonistic enthusiasms which stirred the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Milton Blends the Two: - The spirit of the Reformation provides the content and spirit of Milton poetry, and the spirit 6f the Renaissance classicism its moulded pattern. Milton did in the seventeenth century what the poets of the French Pleiade had done in the sixteenth. "No poet", says Grierson in The First Half of the Seventeenth Century, "realised so completely the Renaissance ideal of poetry cast in classical moulds-carried out so entirely and majestically the programme of the Pleiade. Milton and Milton only, succeeded in producing living and beautiful poems in correct classical forms. And into these classical forms he poured the spirit of the Protestant movement." In fact Milton's Puritanism (a product of the Reformation) and his Hellenism (a product of the Renaissance) were more closely harmonised in his genius than the division of theme and form would suggest. Milton seems to have enlivened Puritanism with Hellenism and tempered his Hellenism with Puritanism. Milton was neither a godless pagan nor a Puritan formalist nor was he both simultaneously. He imbibed the true spirit of both tendencies and wrote under the unified impact of both.

The Reformation Elements: - In Milton's poetry the Reformation element is found as his soft and steady puritanism. Puritans were those who "protested" against even the Protestants who in their turn had protested against the Pope and the Popish religion. The Reformation signifies the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century which gave rise to the various Protestant or Evangelical organisations of Christendom. The movement was European in extent and was widely successful in the reign of Henry VIII, and later Elizabeth I. But some splinter sects rose against the Protestant Church of England which they thought was not yet fully reformed, and who urged to take Christianity back to the religion of Jesus Christ. These Puritans devotedly and rather superstitiously revered the Bible, condemned the Protestant bishop (episcopacy) and every institutionalised religion, emphasised every man's inner light, hated all arts such as painting, sculpture and music and even drama, all show and luxury, shied at the least appearance of evil, favoured highly formalised and rigorous conduct, and, in general, turned against all literature and aesthetic pursuits. Now, Milton was born in a Puritan

family. His schooling and surroundings, his social and political affiliations, and a number of other factors combined to instil in him a love of Puritan ideology and way of life. However, he was a man of too strong an individuality to accept any formal "ism" in its totality. He was a deeply religious man, and even at the age of twenty-three he could write:

All is, if I have grace to use it so;
As ever in my great Task Master's eye.

Milton's puritanism has not much to do with the stoic creed of ordinary puritans. The Renaissance elements of his intellectual set-up effectively controvert these tendencies and any fanatic adherence to a rigorous code of conduct and ultimate values. His version of puritanism was tinged by his love of the classics, the love of nature, the love of beauty, and Renaissance humanism insisting on the world of man, and love of "the human face divine." Moreover, unlike most Puritans, Milton emphasises the spirit rather than the conduct. And this emphasis brings him into affinity with the Cambridge Platonists who were themselves mostly Puritans. Milton believed that "the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than Scripture.'' In his pamphlet Of True Religion he states that along with external Scripture there is an internal Scripture, "the Holy Spirit written in the Hearts of believers". Milton departed from the Puritan creed even in some important doctrinal points. For instance, he did not subscribe to the doctrine of predestination and refused the Son an equal status with the Father. In more general terms, he tried to reconstruct the Puritan creed on the basis of the humanistic ideology of the Renaissance.

The Renaissance Elements: - The Renaissance in England gave rise to a large number of tendencies. It brought in its wake love and appreciation of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, a keen love of beauty and art, and a new stress on human life and pursuits. Milton is obviously affected by all these ramifications of the spirit of the Renaissance. In short, the Renaissance spirit in Milton was influenced and modified by his ingrained puritanism. The Renaissance elements show themselves in Milton in two ways:

(i) They provide, as we have already-said, the classical framework for most of his major poetical works.

(ii) They leaven, humanise, Hellenise, refine, and somewhat secularise his puritanism and mitigate its severity. Almost all of Milton's poetic works are embodiments of the Renaissance and the Reformation elements.

Puritan Element in Paradise Lost: - The very theme of Paradise Lost shows the Puritan or Hebraic element in Milton. The fact that he chose the Fall of Man as the theme of his great epic shows the Puritan in him. Wars and adventurous deeds did not interest the Puritan poet.

Not sedulous by nature to indite"
War!, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deemed... (Book IX-27-29)

The theme is the most heroic of all great English poems. He based his great work on the story of the Fall of Man, as given in the Bible. To him this story was not fictitious or legendary, but literally and historically true. It was indeed his Puritan character that led him to this theme, but it gave full scope for the expression of his stupendous genius. Though he has introduced wars and adventurous deeds into the body of the epic, according to the classical tradition, the central theme of the poem is disobedience to

God's command and the consequent Fall of Man. The conflict in the epic is not external; it is a spiritual conflict 'Man's first disobedience.' The theme of the epic, thus, is religious; it is based on the Bible.

In Paradise Lost, Milton's object is not only to "assert Eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to men," but much more. For the poem contains profound observations on religion, morality, politics, government, war and peace and the relationship between man and woman, arts, sciences, explorations and on practically all the important aspects of life. All are sanctified by 'whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave."

"Paradise Lost" based upon classical model: - The division of the epic into twelve books, the relieving similes, the councils, the heroic catalogues and the heavenly messengers, are only some of the technical devices that show Milton's indebtedness to the classics.

The form of the epic and treatment of the religious theme are entirely in classical tradition. Milton had declared that he would write an epic in the style of Homer, and every element in the form of Paradise Lost is in the classical style. We have in Paradise Lost all the ingredients of the classical epic-invocation to the Muse, plunging into the very middle of the action, description of war, gradual development of action leading up to the climax - viz, plucking the fruit of the forbidden trees, resulting in the Fall of Man, and then the resolution of the conflict ending in Man's loss of Paradise. Thus the plan and design of Paradise Lost follows meticulously the classical models of homer and Virgil.

In telling the story of the Fall of Man, Milton fully expresses the spirit of the Renaissance. One of the fundamental attributes of Milton's character was his love of freedom and spirit of independence. In the story of Adam there was the conflict between pre-destination and free will. Without entering into theological controversy we may say that Milton was all for freedom, and pointed out how Adam plucked the fruit out of his free will (induced no doubt by Eve), though he had been commanded by God not to do so. And as a result of disobedience he fell under the wrath of Gold. The moral thesis of Genesis is submission to the Almighty, which makes out disobedience to be sinful. But Milton, who wished to emphasize this moral, had an independent spirit and had lived independently. He had acclaimed and advocated the rebellion against the prelates and even the king, and celebrated the glories of regicide. In spite of himself, he was in deep sympathy with Satan, the great rebel of Heaven and the enemy of God. This spirit of rebellion is embodied in the character of Satan, and it is in Satan that Milton put most of himself, his pride and temperament.

In Paradise Lost we have a combination which is absolutely unique in the literature of the time; a poem which has all the deep spiritual fervour of Puritanism, decorated and diversified by every ornament and beauty which could possibly be borrowed from classical literature and mythology. The reader will feel a sense of confusion arise at times from the strange mixture of Christian and pagan ideas. It is essentially the Hell of the ancient Greeks and Romans which Milton describes where the river of Lathe, Cocytus and Styx flow, and it is the Greek Fury, named Medusa who guards the fort. The dreadful figures of Sin and Death are modelled on ancient classical monsters, while Chaos is surrounded by the classical figure of Ades, Orcus and Demogorgon. This makes us wonder what Milton really did believe in, but the fact is that the Christian Bible does not supply a clear picture of Hell and is not very definite as regards the geography or population of the lower region. On the other hand, the classical conception was clear-cut, vivid and pictorial and hence Milton did not hesitate to draw boldly from it so that the nakedness and deficiencies of the Puritan conception would be well hidden under gaudy pagan robes.

Impact of Classical Scholarship in the Style of "Paradise Lost": - In the style of Paradise Lost again, we find the unmistakable impress of classical scholarship. His use of similes, "his use of history and geography, his knowledge of the ancient and modern literature, his love of art and music, his culture and refinement-all point to the influence of the Renaissance and Hellenism on his receptive mind. There is no poetic work so stupendous in its scope, so sublime in its style and moral outlook, which can be compared with Milton's Paradise Lost.

A typical Renaissance figure Milton was impregnated with the classics but he equally drew his inspiration from the Bible and from Hebrew lore. His epic shows his familiarity with the literature, history and the lore of medieval and Renaissance Europe. He understood the technique of music, architecture, engineering, soldiering, astronomy and uses illustration from all of these to add majesty and variety to his work.

One of the most significant features of the use he makes of his learning in the manner in which he adapts classical lore to his Christian purpose and mingles reference to the classical with the use of the Bible and Hebrew mythology, i.e. He is inspired by a **'Muse'** (classical) but the Muse is 'heavenly', the one which inspired Moses: he combines his **appeal to the Muse for help** with connected appeal to the **New Testament of Holy spirit**. His **Hell** is the Gehenna of the Jews but at the same time the **Hades of the Greeks**. His **devils** will be the **Gods of Paganism** (Palestinian, Egyptian, Greek), and in the remarkable 'naming' section he offers us a full display of his learning in the various mythologies. God-like **Zeus** - uses thunder and is the **Thunderer**. **Sin and Death** are allegorical figures from Milton's Christian imagination, but the de**scription of Sin's birth is adapted from the classical accounts of the birth of Pallas Athene**, while the **revolting description of Sin** herself is modelled on the account given of **Scylla by Ovid and Virgil.** The description of the **position in space of the Earth's Universe**-hanging by a golden chain from Heaven - is taken from **Homer's story of the golden chain of Zeus**, etc.

Conclusion: - Paradise Lost is great by reason of its vast imaginative range, and its deep moral earnestness. It was the influence of the Renaissance, with spirit of humanism and classicism that gave to the poem its epic form and its imaginative grandeur; while its subject-matter and its moral earnestness are due to the influence of the Reformation with its spirit of Hebraism.

Autobiographical Elements in "Paradise Lost"

Paradise Lost is an epic, and an epic is a work of objective art. As such, there is hardly any scope for the poet to express himself in an epic poem. But Milton was a self-centred individual and so, in spite of the fact that he was writing an epic, his personality expressed itself all through the poem. In fact, he revealed himself in all his works, whether he was writing an ode or an elegy or an epic, or a masque or a drama. Coleridge rightly points out: "John Milton is in every line of Paradise Lost." The whole poem is coloured by the personality of Milton. Milton is in truth the only living being who exists in his own works. He projects himself, his feelings, knowledge and aspiration into the characters of his epic, both the primitive human creatures and the superhuman beings, whether celestial or infernal.

Self-revelation in "Paradise Lost": - Being a great epic poem, Paradise Lost should be just as impersonal as that of the drama. But we find that the whole poem is coloured by the personality of Milton; we see Milton, the Puritan, Milton, the classical scholar, Milton, the hater of autocratic government and kingship, Milton, the despiser of women. Throughout the poem some passages stand out among the remaining ones because they form part of the spiritual autobiography of the poet. It is unlikely that they crept in

unconsciously, for their anticipations occur in his earlier utterances in prose or verse. His tirades against the corrupt practices of the Roman Catholic Church, his poor opinion of women, his condemnation of the rosy path of dalliance with particular reference to courtly revelries, and his poignant references to his blindness and solitude.

Milton, the Champion of Popular Liberty: - Milton was particularly independent in character, and could not fit himself into the discipline of an old established University. Whatever savoured to him of oppression in civil life or in religion was to his dislike. In his own way he was as determined a rebel against constituted authority and as ardent an apostle of liberty. This, unconsciously, he puts into the mouth of Satan reflects a great deal of the ideals and aspirations of Milton. It is in the passage where Satan speaks of the joy of independence, and of the hatred which he bears to the tyranny of Heaven's Ruler, that he reaches the most commanding heights of noble eloquence. The reason for this is obvious, for Milton was the great champion of popular liberty in his own day, and gave up the best years of his life, as well as his eyesight, to the cause of England's fight against oppression. Milton cannot impart to Satan some of his own sentiments and putting him in the position of the champion of liberty against autocratic rulers. The very idea of kingship had become hateful to Milton.

Thus, Satan is a projection of Milton's own self. The greatest character of Paradise Lost is a projection of Milton's own self. Satan embodies Milton's courage, love of freedom, republicanism and hatred of tyranny. Just as Milton opposed the autocracy of King Charles I and became a stern republican, so also Satan defied the authority of God and rebelled against Him. Again, the defeat of the republican's cause, with which Milton identified himself did not and could not curb his spirit so also the defeat of Satan could not damp his unconquerable spirit of defiance. It seems Milton himself speaks when Satan says:

What though the field be lost
All is not lost; the unconquerable will
And courage never to submit or yield.
What else is not to overcome.

The wonderful eloquence of the council in Hell is an echo from a period of passionate parliamentary life. It cannot be denied that "the debate in Hell would have been lacking in power and verisimilitude if the poet had not lived through the period of the long parliament." Moreover, the war in heaven is the civil war of England, characterized by bitterness of feeling and language peculiar to internal broils.

Milton's Self in Adam: - Another part of Milton's self is exhibited in Adam, who is pious, God-fearing and grave, but susceptible to feminine charm. Through Adam, Milton expresses his feelings towards woman. Adam expresses a bitter cry wrung from Milton by the unforgotten miseries of his first marriage. The scene of reconciliation between Adam and Eve is reminiscent of a similar scene between Milton and his first wife.

Style Bears Stamp of Milton's Mind: - The style of Paradise Lost bears upon it the unmistakable stamp of Milton's mind. The blank verse of Paradise Lost is the verse of a great poet and a great musical artist. On the one hand, it soars high into the lofty region of imagination and on the other; it possesses a grand music. His achievements in constructing his new blank verse are unique indeed. He made his verse perfectly suited to his lofty subject-matter.

The Biblical and classical allusions which abound in Paradise Lost indicate the scholarship and learning of Milton. The style of Milton, unique in itself, has all the stamp of Milton's personality. The word "Miltonic" has acquired a special significance, and is now synonymous with "sublime". It is not only the theme of the poem that lifts the reader to

a lofty moral plane, but its style also reaches the highest watermark of grand style in English poetry. Milton's constant use of Latinism in his construction and phraseology is not merely a device to impart grandeur to his style, but it is a necessary mode of his self-expression. Though such Latinisms are alien to the genius of English language, they are a part of Milton's intellectual equipment, and come naturally to a man, whose mind was nourished on the classics as Milton's was.

Unconscious symbolism in "Paradise Lost": -The Cavaliers and High Church party were described as Philistines, Moabites, and Hitties, who were indulging in persecution of God's chosen people. Milton unconsciously adopts some of this attitude of Paradise Lost. He gives a list of all the heathen gods, and the tribes who worshipped them, and identifies the angels who fell from heaven with these gods. This leads him into a detailed account of many of the episodes in the history of the Israelites, and one cannot help feeling that Milton is continually thinking of his own party when he talks about God's chosen people, and of his opponents in politics, church, and the ideal worshippers.

Conclusion: - The whole of Paradise Lost is full of autobiographical passages. His high seriousness, his proud and resolute will and his grave sadness at the folly of mankind are interwoven in the whole of his story. Both the theme and the style of Paradise Lost are expressions of Milton's personality, his thought, his learning, and his moral, political and religious outlook. The figure of Satan is partly an embodiment of Milton's own spirit of freedom, republicanism and stern determination and courage in the teeth of adversity. Apart from the revelation of Milton through the characters of Satan and Adam, there are occasional references in Paradise Lost to Milton's blindness. Milton had become totally blind when he wrote Paradise Lost and had fallen upon evil days. The lines describing his misfortune are full of pathos, because they come from the very heart of Milton. Thus the poem is full of passages that recall the life of the poet.

Paradise Lost : Christ as a Hero

The story of mankind's fall from Eden as written by John Milton in his epic poem Paradise Lost portrays a classically heroic Satan and a modern hero in Christ. While Satan fits the model of an epic hero as classic heroes are not the true savoirs of the people. He is directly contrasted by Christ, who is not a gloriously strong warrior like the antique heroes. The complex character of Satan has power beyond measure when compared to man but ultimately falls due to his refusal to bow down before God. Christ is not depicted as a warrior at all, but still remains as the savoir of humankind who falls. However, this fall is not due to any of his flaw. His willingness to die for man is his greatest heroic strength.

Satan takes on the role of protagonist which presents him as a false hero. He is the most essential character to the entire story. Epic heroes such as Odysseus and Achilles were written with very similar traits: **strength beyond that of normal men, natural leaders and warriors**, followers who believed in them, **deities remaining watchful of their actions**, yet **imperfect to the death**. Like Satan, these heroes were the protagonists of their respected epics. This essentially appeals us into viewing him a hero. In Book I, he delivers a reuniting cry to his fellow fallen angel. He is the main character leading his men in a revolution against all powerful system. He is angry that God holds Christ in higher regard than His angels. His evil is brought to human level which enables us to understand him emotionally while his power is elevated to that of a hero, allowing us to see him as a powerful warrior capable of waging war. This deep building of the Satan character gives the illusion that he is a hero. He fits into the criteria for what the hero of an epic poem should be. But he is missing one trait to prevent him from being a true hero: **sacrifice for the greater good**.

Satan's desires are never noble. He is fighting for a cause he truly believes in as he struggles against what he considers oppression, but the actuality is that his cause is an evil one - the corruption of mankind. God explains that Satan was made **"just and right, sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3. 98-99),** indicating that his path is not the only one available for Satan. He does not need to serve evil. But he chooses that path, and with no greater noble cause to fight for, he is unable to be a true hero. Instead, his path is selfish as he chooses only to serve himself. Not once does he ask for God's redemption in order to serve Him again, nor does he try to serve God's will on Earth. Satan chooses, using his own free will, to continue down the path of bringing evil into the new perfect world that God has created for man. Without a noble cause, Satan is unable to be a true hero.

Christ is not a classic hero, but he is made to be the most heroic character in Paradise Lost. Milton introduces Christ and immediately depicts God warning Him of Satan's attempt to **"by force... destroy, or worse, ...pervert"** (3. 91-92). And while Satan looks to serve only himself, Christ shows willingness to take the ultimate sacrifice when he proclaims **"I offer, on me let thine angel fall" (3. 237)** and "**on me let Death wreck all his rage" (3. 241).** This is where Christ becomes the hero because he literally offers himself up to die. While the classic hero would fall because of a very human flaw, Christ 's fall was because of mankind's flaws. He is separated from all of the classic heroes and placed above them because he did not save his people as a warrior, killing many armies. He followed God's most noble wish. Achilles died for his country, yet Christ died for all of mankind. Milton intentionally uses this fact to show Christ as not as epic hero, but a true savoir to humanity. This is what makes him a new hero, as Milton cleverly is able to justify by making his achievements so much more valuable to all of mankind than any classic hero.

To put Satan and Christ into heroic perspective, **God must also be examined**. In simple terms, Satan rose up against his oppressor in attempt to overthrow a government he felt was unjust. He fought against the Almighty being from which everything was created, including Satan's own ability to fight against Him. He is not like the Greek and Roman gods that can be fought against while remaining heroic because His will decides what is heroic or if any being is even able to fight against Him. In contrast to Satan's use of his **free will** to rise up against God, there is Christ, Jesus Christ, who chooses to be the **sacrificial lamb for mankind**. This separates him from any other hero in the fact that his death led to salvation, not his personal downfall.

John Milton's Paradise Lost does put a new perspective on what an epic poem's hero can be. Although Satan could be identified as the hero, it seems evident that, according to Milton, classical heroes with similar traits as Satan should not be considered true heroes at all. In the context of Paradise Lost, heroes of that nature are just men. Like all of man, they are sinners, and their true value comes from whether they can use their God enabled free will to do something God deems positive. Christ was the true hero of Paradise Lost, as he showed everything that Satan could not. When he was needed by God, he stepped up voluntarily and acted as an instrument of salvation for humanity. While not portrayed as a larger-than-life warrior, the character of Christ sacrifices himself to be a true hero, breaking all the traditions of an epic hero.

Milton as an epic poet

No Metaphysical Influences: - Milton's instincts and training kept him almost untouched by metaphysical influence — though we might ask, for instance, if "Himself is his own dungeon" (Comus, Line 385) is less metaphysical than Andrew Marvell's "mine own precipice I go". Milton conceived of poetry as "more simple, sensuous, and

passionate" than logic and rhetoric, but these terms are not an adequate description of his own work. Milton was, to put it roughly, as Spenserian who became the greatest of European neo-classical poets. In other words, he belonged to what had once been, and through him continued to be, the main stream, of English poetry. He moved rapidly from a thin and "conceited" Elizabetnan sweetness towards concentration, order, rationality, and restraint, Corm's was a unified mosaic of the earlier and later styles of Milton and his whole century.

His Steady and Sonorous Style: - "The poetry of Milton's earlier years was sensuous, ornate and beautiful, showing decorative features derived from the exuberant literature of the Elizabethan- period. The sonnets written during the 1640s and 1650s show his style growing more direct. In Paradise Lost he brought together the exuberant fancy of his early poems and this new sense that poetry must speak directly about life with dramatic 'immediacy if it is to have the strongest possible effect. The basic movement of Paradise Lost is -steady and sonorous, but the story moves steadily forward all the time without the ornate decorative movements that are so charming but undramatic in a work like Comus. Milton imparts information rapidly, even to the point of distorting the syntax of his blank verse lines so L as to crowd related classes or epithets close together.

Decorative imagination: - Paradise Lost reveals at almost every point a steady forward impulse. Yet the decorative imagination such as characterised Milton's early poems is not excluded. Here, as in so many other respects, Milton learned how to bring all his gifts into plays, ordering them and subordinating them to the grand pattern of his narrative. For example, epic similes introduce the Arthurian legends with their chivalric elements that had fired Milton's youthful imagination. The elves aryl fairies of Elizabethan poetry could be similarly admitted, as could the ornate decorativeness of Spenser. But because these elements are introduced through epic similes they are related to the main story and illuminate it. They exist in a clearly subsidiary position as vivid side-lights on the main action. yet, just as the mellifluous classical names of places and people (for which Milton had shown his fondness as early as in the Nativity Ode of 1629) relate Milton's epic to all human experience and earlier literature, so the imaginative descriptive side of Paradise Lost links it not only with the work of other writers but also with the ideas and areas of study which had found expression in Milton's youthful poems."

Paradise Lost – His Masterpiece: - Milton's Paradise Lost is the greatest epic poem in English literature. Indeed, with its sublime imagery, its harmonious verse, its Titanic background of heaven, hell, and the limitless void that lies between, it is unsurpassed in any literature. It is a colossal epic, not of a man or a hero, but of the whole race of man. The splendour of heaven, the horror of hell, the serene beauty of paradise, the sun and planets suspended between celestial light and gross darkness, are described with an imagination that is almost superhuman.

Harbinger of Tradition "Paradise:- Lost shows Milton as Christian humanist using all the resources of the European literary tradition that had come down to him–biblical, classical, medieval renaissance ; pagan, Jewish and Christian. Imagery from classical fable and medieval romance, allusions to myths, legends and stories of all kinds, geographical imagery deriving from Milton's own fascination with books of travel and echoes of the Elizabethan excitement at the new discoveries, biblical history and doctrine, — all these and more are found in this great synthesis of all that the western mind was stored with • by the middle of the seventeenth century. Like The Faerie Queene, Milton's epic is a great synthesizing poem, but Milton's synthesis is more successful than Spenser's because he places his different kinds of knowledge — biblical, classical, medieval, modern– in a logical hierarchy, and never mingles, as Spenser often does, classical myth and biblical story on equal terms. If all the resources of classical

mythology are employed in order to build up an overwhelming picture of the beauty of Eden before the Fall, that is because Milton is saying that here, and here only, were all the yearnings of men for ideal gardens fully realised. The description of Eden in Book IV is, indeed one of the finest examples of Milton's use of pagan classical imagery for a clearly defined Christian purpose.

Milton's imaginative Power: - Milton's imaginative control of his scenes extends even` to illustrative details and exact features of language. The epic similes are nearly always exactly linked in style and subject with the main events of the story at the moment they occur, while often providing an ironic commentary upon them.

Milton's imagination was always at ease when dealing with immensity, and the scale of Paradise Lost is surely immense. More than any other English poet he is at home with huge panoramas on a cosmic scale. He had a curiously aerial imagination, and the breath taking account of Satan's flight through Chaos at the end of Book II illustrates this. Even in his earliest poems Milton's view frequently broadens out beyond the limits of a particular scene to become a great panorama on a cosmic scale. Here is a stanza from the Nativity Ode:

> **So when the sun in bed,**
> **Curtained with cloddy red**
> **Pillows his head upon an orient wave.**
> **The flocking shadows pale**
> **Troop to th'infernal**
> **Each fettered ghost skips. to his several grave,**
> **And the yellow-skirted Pays**
> **Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.**

This stanza is typical of Milton's imaginative practice and anticipates several features of the style of Paradise Lost. The idea of the sun in bed may be far-fetched and Milton writes effortlessly about things on this grand scale. His mind easily slips from this gorgeous, baroque scene to the world of ghosts and shadows and then to a fairy world in the final two

Master of Grand Style: - With Milton's sense of beauty was combined a stateliness of manner which gives a high dignity to his poetry. He is a master of what is known as the grand style. He wielded the blank verse with an exceptional mastery. His poetry is distinguished also by its music. The reader who is deaf to the harmonies of Milton has no music in himself. "After Shakespeare, Milton is the greatest English poet; which means that he is the greatest English poet outside the drama but within the tether of epic poetry.

'Free Will' in Milton's Paradise Lost

Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost* allows its readers a penetrating insight into the debates and anxieties of 17th century England. It is deeply informed by the poet's own political sympathies with the Puritan revolutionaries and his experience of the rule of James I and Charles I. The rise of capitalism and imperialism in Britain too at the same time brought in an increasing consciousness of individuality and agency fuelling the debates on man's free will and potential. However, the most powerful and radical contemporary debate of Milton's concern, would have been the **Puritan rejection of the authority of the king and the church and the redefinition of man's relationship with God in terms of the personal and the individual**. Puritanism in its bid to free Christianity of the bondages of ecclesiastical interpretation and the monopoly of the Church asserted the

right of every man to exert his free will in interpreting the Bible. The same, however, even in destabilizing the idea of authority and social hierarchy made necessary a re-thinking of the very idea of free will itself. The issue of free will and authority in Paradise Lost read in such a context becomes fraught with larger ideological and historical debates, and of great political implication.

A period of such religious transition as that to which Milton belonged could not have been but ridden with anxieties of disorder and loss of faith, also evident is the fact that the emphasis on free will permeating the text of *Paradise Lost* is much a product of Milton's ingenuity. It can be argued nonetheless that though intense, Milton's definition of free will remains inevitably and inherently wanting, in that it becomes more of an instrument to reiterate God's authority as supreme and absolute rather than man's own agency. As explicit in God's speech -

What pleasure I from such obedience paid
When Will and Reason(Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled
Made passive both, had serv'd necessity
Not mee (Bk III, Paradise Lost)

The exercise of free will becomes a mode of servility to God; in fact it becomes a pre-condition for devotion and obedience. **"Free will allows subjects to respond creatively to their calling for obedience and love and interpret it in their personal way."** Such a restricted understanding as this, derived from Milton's representation of the potential of free will in *Paradise Lost*, suggests some problem in his definition of the term itself.

As can be seen in Adam's parting words to Eve in the separation scene, **"God towards thee has done his part do thine"**, the exercise of agency should according to Adam and the sympathetic voice of the Miltonic bard ideally always be informed by a sense of total obligation towards God, and a fear of death or punishment. Even the exercise of reason becomes suspect

Lest by some fair appearing good surprised
She dictate false, and misinform the will
To do what God expressly hath forbid. (Bk IX, Paradise Lost)

Everything therefore in the Miltonic scheme of things, even reason gets subordinated to the command of God. Here again one must mention as above that "reason is choice".

Free will remains a convenient and non-existent ideal in terms of Milton's human rights agenda, where the only creatures to be exercising it are seen as Satanic or the causal agents of "all our woe". Many critics hail the pre-lapsarian Eden as home to absolute freedom of will however the very example of the punitive relegation of Satan to Hell contradicts the belief.

Adam has been taken as the intellectual superior of Eve. Such a hierarchizing undermines her credibility at making decisions as equally informed as Adam's. At the same time this frames Eve as more susceptible to giving in to temptation. Therefore all of her independent decisions and assertion of individuality becomes suspect. Eve's decision that they work apart is an assertion of free will informed by a personal consciousness of the need for efficiency and to earn their supper. However, it gets branded as an act of transgression in the larger scheme of things as it conflicts with

the wishes of Adam, her "intellectual" superior and her voice is never sympathized with but seen as the voice of challenge or opposition to the feudal patriarchal world order, where God is to man what man is to woman, while the woman remains subjugated twice over.

Satan in his fall affords us with an interesting comparison with Eve. It is inescapable that both are in their social locations relatively inferior, Satan to Christ, and Eve to Adam. As embodied in the speech of the snake, the real temptation for both, Eve and Satan is then to rise above their given locations, to become equals with Adam and God respectively, **"For unequal who is free?"** What thus gets constructed as the sinful temptation is, as in Satan's words, "vent'ring above my lot". The construction of free will purely in terms of obedience to God, then gets exposed as a kind of control mechanism to ensure that all creatures:

Stand fast; to stand or fall
Free in thine own arbitrament it lies
Perfect within, no outward aid require;
And all temptation to transgress repel (Paradise Lost Book VIII)

The actual scene of temptation and the instance of Eve's exercise of free will suggests the presence of certain restrictions on her exercising her free will. "**But his forbidding commends thee more"** reveals how restrictions themselves take the form of temptation, not even in terms of absolute defiance of authority but as an assertion of the absolute freedom of will and aspiration to knowledge that she feels denied. Eve in stating,

For good unknown, sure is not had
And yet unknown is as not had at all

exposes the problems in Milton's definition of free will in terms of its counter, i.e. disobedience, by using the same method of inversion of discourse to define "good" in terms of knowing it from bad. In her understanding of good being proved faulty is also automatically proved erroneous Milton's understanding and adumbration of the idea of free will.

Contextualizing what we have thus argued our understanding of free will as depicted in *Paradise Lost* to be, we can see how such a construction of agency works vis-à-vis Milton's political position. While the emphasis on individual agency is in keeping with the wider social currents and ethos of his time, the subordination of will to the command of God institutes a system of self-imposed morality in the absence of institutionalized systems of enforcement, i.e. the church; the threat of damnation for the sin of impertinence sets an example against the assertion of equal rights that may challenge patriarchy or the dominant. However conducive it might be to Milton's politics, such an understanding of free will remains essentially incomplete and restricted as argued above.

Humanism in "Paradise Lost"

Humanism is an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems. It is in fact Renaissance cultural movement

that turned away from medieval scholasticism and revived interest in ancient Greek and Roman thought.

"Paradise Lost" has held its place for three centuries as the greatest poem in the English language. It has been the touchstone of literary appreciation, the test by which the reader's taste and understanding have been judged. It came into the world unheralded and unsung, but within a few years it cut out all its contemporaries and the ancients too. To what amazing quality or combination of qualities can this supreme triumph be attributed? Many would answer: the style; and indeed no man, not even Shakespeare, handled the English language with such superb and dignified mastery, with such unerring skill and such sonorous effect as Milton. But no work of art survives merely because of style; it is the perfect combination of manner and matter, the language and the thought-content, which gives such work immortality and raises it to the rank of a classic. It was humanistic touch that made it to survive.

Milton was indeed a humanist. He was brought up in the tradition of Plato; the speculations of the Greek philosophers were his rod and staff, the dramas of the great tragedians his daily bread. He was a Renaissance scholar who had discovered afresh the vitality of the Greek outlook. The stories of Greece were parables that spoke that his inmost being. He had the Greek thirst for knowledge, the Greek love of beauty, the Greek devotion to liberty, the Greek insistence on the primacy of man. He was of the breed which strove with gods outside the walls of Troy and on the high seas. And when he decided to put himself wholly into one mighty utterance which the world would not willingly let die, he chose a theme which would have delighted his Greek predecessors. It had just that slightly ironic flavour which they appreciated, that emphasis on a human problem, that wide sweep which covered the three worlds that are found in the writings of the Greek masters. But Milton had something which the Greeks did not have–the assurance that the problem was not insoluble and–if only the Greeks would understand–it was a solution which continued to uphold the dignity of man, for one greater Man–yes, a Man, could restore us and regain the blissful seat.

Thus we see the fruition of the humanist outlook in Paradise Lost. The story revolves around that weak, helpless creature called Man. But, in spite of his frailty, he is the centre of the universe. For him a whole cosmogony has been devised, for him worlds have been created, and his welfare concerns regions beyond ours. For his salvation councils are held in Heaven and for his destruction pandemonium prevails in Hell. This gives Man a dignity and a status which is entirely different from the position afforded to him in Greek epic or drama. In Paradise Lost, Man is not the victim of some inexorable, inexplicable fate against which he is pitted in unequal struggle, nor can it be said of men that

Like flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.

Adam's position in *Paradise Lost* has been much misunderstood, though Eve's role has been better appreciated. But Adam represents the real human element. He is, as his name implies, truly a man. In his long conversations with the angels are the questions which have always troubled man: Who am I, whence have I come, and what is my destiny? With the creation of the new and strangely fascinating creature Eve, a whole realm of problem and perplexity bursts upon Adam; love, without which man cannot exist which does not enter alone; for in his train are tears and doubts and immemorial pain; and companionship, failure and forgiveness. With the bitter experience of Eden comes the hard lesson that humanity refuses to learn but must learn, if it should survive in God's universe–that obedience to the moral law is the guarantee of peace and security and that the price of disobedience is the loss of Paradise, the Paradise of an innocent and undefiled mind.

Most readers of *Paradise Lost* have been perplexed by one difficulty, that Milton seems to be on the side of Satan; in the titanic struggle between good and evil he seems to admire the infernal enemy rather than the All-wise and All-good. While it is true that much of Milton's colossal energy has gone into the creation of Satan, it is not correct to say that he is on Satan's side. He is interested in Satan more perhaps than in God, because in Satan he finds the same conflict as in Man, the same dualism, the same upsurging of the good, the same punishment of it and conscious choice of evil that have disfigured humanity. Indeed it is an intensely human Satan that Milton has created, a being who can feel the pangs of envy when he sees Adam and Eve imparadised in one another's arms and realises that he can never know that bliss. So, in this sense, Milton is Satan, Milton is Adam, and now the triumphant instrument of God's punishment.

So to all lovers of humanity, to all believers in the dignity of the human race, to all champions of human rights and liberties, Milton has left his legacy–the soul-stirring, challenging, elevating message of *Paradise Lost.* That such a challenge is needed more than ever today we need not doubt. Nor do we need to question Milton's answer to our perplexity, that human problems cannot be solved merely on the human plane. In the acceptance of this truth lies our only hope, and the fulfillment of Milton's vision of a new Heaven and Earth wherein the just shall dwell,

And after all their tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds
With Joy and Love triumphing and fair Truth.

Paradise Lost Book IX : Summary & Analysis

Summary

In the prologue to Book IX, Milton says that his work must now take a tragic tone and that this Christian epic, though different, is nonetheless more heroic than earlier epics like the Iliad and the Aeneid. Again, he calls on Urania as the muse of Christian inspiration to help him complete his work and show the true heroism that lies in the Christian idea of sacrifice. Then Milton returns to his story.

Satan returns to Eden eight days after being forced out by Gabriel. He has studied all the animals and has decided to approach Eve in the form of a serpent which he considers to be the "subtlest Beast of all the Field" (86).

The following morning, Adam and Eve prepare for their daily work tending the Garden. Because the Garden's growth seems to surpass their labors, Eve suggests that on this day they work apart. She thinks they can accomplish more working individually. Adam argues the point with Eve, saying that Raphael has warned them of dangers and that she is more vulnerable by herself. He and she continue this argument — she proposing that they work alone; he proposing that they work together — until Adam finally relents; however, he makes Eve promise to return to their bower soon, but Milton comments that she will never return to Adam in the way that she was that morning.

Satan in the form of the serpent is surprised and excited to find Eve alone tending flowers. He watches her and for a few moments becomes enraptured and forgets his evil nature. Then he remembers what his purpose is — to destroy God's creation. The serpent approaches Eve upright upon its tail. His various acts fail to attract Eve's attention because she is used to dealing with animals. However, when the serpent speaks, complimenting Eve on her beauty, playing on both her vanity and curiosity, Eve is suddenly interested. She is especially curious about how the serpent learned to speak.

Satan replies through the serpent that he learned speech by eating the fruit of a particular tree in the Garden. He acquired speech and the ability to reason and has, therefore, sought Eve out to worship as the most beautiful of God's creations.

When Eve inquires which tree gave the serpent his abilities, he takes her to the Tree of Knowledge. Eve tells the serpent that God has forbidden Man to eat from that tree, and she chooses to obey God. Satan, using the same sophistic reasoning he has used throughout the story, tells Eve that God has tricked her and Adam. He has eaten of the tree and is not dead; neither will they die. Instead the tree will give them knowledge, which will make them like God. This fact makes God envious and has caused him to demand that Adam and Eve not eat of the tree. Eve is taken in by the words of the serpent, and after some rationalizing, she convinces herself that she should eat the fruit. And she does.

Now Eve suddenly worships the Tree of Knowledge as a god, even as all nature weeps for her fall. Her thoughts turn to Adam, and she decides that he must eat the fruit also. She cannot bear the idea that she might die and Adam would be given another wife. When Eve approaches Adam, he drops the wreath of flowers that he was weaving for her hair. Eve quickly tells him what she has done, and Adam just as quickly makes his own decision. He allows his physical love and passion for Eve to outweigh his reason. He knowingly eats the fruit and is immediately affected with carnal desire for Eve. The two humans exit to engage in "amorous play" (1045). The description here is not of love but lust.

After sex, Adam and Eve fall into a deep sleep. They awake and are overcome with shame and guilty knowledge. They both are weeping, and they launch into arguments with each other. Adam says Eve is at fault; she replies in kind. Milton describes them as spending "fruitless hours" (1188) in bitter accusation. Each is willing to blame the other, but neither is willing to accept responsibility. Paradise is gone and in its place guilt, blame, and shame. Milton says that both of them have given way to "Appetite" (1129), and reason is lost. Paradise has ended; the earth has begun.

Analysis

Milton's fourth invocation differs from earlier ones in that he does not call on Urania, except obliquely, and he does not mention his blindness. Rather he offers an explanation for his epic and says that the tone must now become "Tragic" (6). The word "tragic" had two connotations for Milton. First, it carried the simple moral meaning of something terribly bad or unfortunate. Christians since the Middle Ages had always considered the falls of Lucifer and Adam tragic. But "tragic' also refers to the dramatic concept of tragedy as first defined by Aristotle and developed through the centuries to its high achievement in Elizabethan England. Milton knew the nature of dramatic tragedy from his study of the Greeks (he patterned Samson Agonistes on Greek tragedy) as well as from reading Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists (he wrote an essay On Shakespeare for the Second Folio).

By the seventeenth century, tragedies had assumed a basic format. The play would have a noble hero who had a tragic flaw in either personality or actions. The fortunes of the hero would reverse during the play from good to bad with the hero recognizing his own responsibility for these consequences that resulted from his flaw. The end of the play would result in the death of the hero. Throughout the play, fate would, in one form or another, control the action, and, at the end, the audience would experience a catharsis or purging of emotions, resulting from their empathy with the hero. They should feel pity for the hero and fear for themselves.

To see that Paradise Lost has an underlying tragic structure is not difficult. Adam is a noble character. He has a flaw in his passion for Eve that overrides his reason. He makes the mistake of eating the fruit. He recognizes, eventually, his responsibility for his actions. Death, though not occurring in the epic, is the main result of Adam's action. Fate (God) knows what will happen throughout the poem. And finally, Milton wanted his audience to experience pity for Adam and all mankind but fear for the consequences of their own sinful lives. So when Milton speaks of changing his "Notes to Tragic" (6), he means more than a passing remark.

Yet for all of these connections to tragedy, Paradise Lost is not a tragedy; it is a Christian epic with a tragic core. Adam is a noble hero, but as Milton notes in this prologue, he is not a hero like Achilles, Aeneas, or Odysseus. He is, in Milton's words, a hero of "Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (33). Ultimately too, Adam is regenerated and reconciled rather than just killed. Paradise Lost will end on a hopeful — even joyful — note, since through Adam's fall, salvation and eternal life will come to Man through God's mercy and grace. This felix culpa or "happy fault" is not the stuff of tragedy.

Moreover, even as an epic, Milton says that he was attempting something different in Paradise Lost. He did not want to glorify warfare as in earlier epics like the Iliad. Instead, in his only description of warfare (Book VI), he creates parody rather than magnificence. Rather Milton's goal was to write a Christian epic, specifically a Protestant Christian epic with a new sort of hero, one who wins ultimately through patience and suffering. At the time Milton wrote this particular invocation, he still prayed to the Muse (Urania, Christian inspiration) to help him complete his work and to let it gain acceptance in a time when such a work's fate was unclear.

After the invocation, Milton begins this book with Satan who has been absent for the three books in which Adam and Raphael talked. Satan has degenerated as a character. In his speech in Eden, he is unable to make his thoughts logical. He thinks Earth may be more beautiful than Heaven since God created it after Heaven. He thinks he might be happy on Earth but then argues that he could not be happy in Heaven. He fusses about Man being tended by angels. Satan's ability to think, which seemed potent in Book I, now appears weak and confused. An even greater indication of Satan's character degeneration is that he is now self-delusional. In the early books, he lied but only to get others to do his bidding. In this speech, he lies to himself. He questions whether God actually created the angels, he sees Man as God's revenge on him, and he says that he took half of all the angels out of Heaven. Satan who seemed somewhat heroic in his rebellion now seems to be a dangerous con man who has come to believe his own lies. In the early books, the reader can at least see reasoning as well as envy behind Satan's actions, but, here in Book IX, Satan has become the delusional psychopath who believes his own lies. The concept of heroism cannot be stretched to include Satan's attitude and thinking at this point in the epic.

Milton reinforces Satan's degeneration with visual images. Satan creeps along the ground of Eden in a low-lying mist and ultimately takes on the form of the serpent who crawls along the ground. The shape changes Satan has made in Paradise Lost show a pattern. From angel to cherub, from cherub to cormorant, then to lion and tiger, and finally to toad and snake, Satan has progressively made himself more and more earthbound and lowly. The irony of these shifts in shape is not lost on Satan. As he searches for a serpent to enter, he complains of the bestial nature of the animal that he must

"incarnate and imbrute,
That to the highth of deity aspired" (166-167).

That is, as he tries to become like God, he takes on lower and lower forms. The next scene of Book IX involves the argument between Adam and Eve over whether they should work alone or separately. Some commentators have seen Eve's arguments as a kind of calculated sophistry akin to Satan's that demonstrates Eve's complicity in her own fall. Her argument, however, is more of innocence. She has played the proper womanly role during Raphael's visit, and now she simply wants more freedom and responsibility. Perhaps she wants to show that she can be Adam's equal. To read Eve as a conniver is to overlook her naiveté and innocent desire to be more like Adam.

Satan's attitude when he finds Eve alone shows that the two humans made the wrong decision in separating. When Satan sees Eve by herself, he is pleased that she is not with Adam, who would have been a "Foe not informidable" (486). Eve's only real defense against Satan seems to be her basic beauty and goodness. Satan is so astounded when he first sees her that for a brief period he forgets his purpose and stands "Stupidly good" (465). The scene makes two points: First, the goodness expressed just by Eve's physical person is overwhelming. And second, Satan has lost the capacity for real goodness. He may be momentarily struck dumb and be "stupidly good," but he quickly recovers and is not in any way deflected from his evil purpose.

Satan's temptation of Eve is a cunning masterpiece. As a prelapsarian serpent, he is able to approach her standing upright upon his tail, a

"Circular base of rising folds, that tow'r'd
Fold above fold, a surging maze" (498-99).

* Prelapsarian means characteristic of or belonging to the time or state before the fall of humankind

The images of circuitous, folding mazes occur intermittently throughout Paradise Lost and reach their culmination in this image of the serpent rising to tempt Eve with his body a coiling labyrinth. Visually, Eve is pure, simple innocence; the serpent, unfathomable, complex evil. Eve will soon be lost in his labyrinthine argument and plot.

Satan as serpent first uses his physical beauty and speech to impress Eve, who finds him beautiful. A number of writers have found sexual undertones in the description of the serpent:

"pleasing was his shape,
And lovely" (503-04).

An old Jewish tradition even had it that Eve made love with the serpent. Milton's subtle sexualizing of the serpent followed this tradition and adds another element to Eve's fall. William Blake, in his illustration for this scene, certainly noticed sexual imagery. At first glance, Eve appears to kiss the serpent, but is, in fact, taking a bite of a very phallic apple in the serpent's mouth. The fruit hanging from the Tree of Life in Blake's illustration suggests nothing so much as male genitalia.

Eve is also taken with the fact that the serpent talks. Further, the snake is not in the angelic form of the tempter in Eve's dream, so she is not put on guard by the creature. (Milton has made it clear earlier that Adam and Eve were never threatened by any animal in Eden.) Satan first flatters Eve. He licks the ground. He says he worships her beauty. The reader recalls that Eve narcissistically became enamored of her own image in the water at her creation. She is vain, but she is also secondary to Adam. Here a talking snake praises her beauty and says he worships her. She is interested though not enraptured.

But when the serpent takes Eve to the Tree of Knowledge, his arguments come so fast and so deviously that she cannot follow them. At first, she does what she should. She tells the serpent that she cannot eat from the tree. He argues that he has eaten and did not die. Then he adds that God wants her to eat of the tree and, contradictorily, that he envies what the humans might learn if they did eat. The arguments come so fast that Eve cannot answer, let alone think through them. Her innocence in comparison with Satan's cunning overcomes her reason. She is no match for Satan, and so his sophistic arguments seem reason to her. Unlike Adam, Eve buys into the arguments without grasping what is really happening. Eve eats the fruit, and eats, for the first time, gluttonously, letting her appetite take control of her reason.

After she eats, Eve at first feels elated. She thinks that she has reached a higher level but shows this ironically by starting to worship the tree. Her thoughts turn to Adam. Initially, she thinks she might keep this new power for herself and perhaps become his equal. At this point, Eve is conniving; already the fruit has changed her innocence. Even her reason for telling Adam shows this fact. If the fruit indeed leads to death, she does not want to die and leave Adam to another woman. She selfishly wants him to be in the same condition she is.

Adam's temptation and fall is much less complicated than Eve's. When Adam drops the flowery chaplet that he has been making for Eve, he symbolically drops all that he has in Eden. He immediately realizes what Eve has done. Adam makes a conscious decision to eat the fruit because he cannot give up Eve. He allows his physical passion for her to outweigh his reason, and so he eats. Adam's decision is willful, unlike Eve's, which was based on fraudulent argument and weak reason.

After the fall, the two are overcome by lust. Adam says to Eve,
"if such pleasure be
In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd,
For this one Tree had been forbidden ten" (1024-26).

The language of the entire scene is charged with sexual imagery and innuendo. Their appetites are in control, and reason is lost. After their lovemaking, they fall into a troubled sleep — no more innocent dreams. When they wake, they are cognizant of what they have done, and their arguing is that of real people. If their argument at the end of Book IX is compared with their discussion of whether to work alone or together at the beginning, the difference in Man before and after the fall is clear. The opening discussion is reasoned and pleasant; the closing, irrational and bitter.

Paradise Lost Book IX: Human Nature as Central Issue

"Paradise Lost" is a poem about the nature of man. The Biblical story of the fall and its consequences serve as a framework to get the desired aim. The exposure of human nature is made through the characters of Adam and Eve. Both are like and unlike human beings.

Prior to Satan's entry into the Garden of Eden, they are unlike human beings. The degree of innocence, simplicity, credulity, nobility, gentleness, obedience, submission and purity, which the reader finds in them, is hard to be found in human beings. They are more angels-like and less like us. However, after Eve's debate with Adam over the separation of their labour still repentance that they become attractive and representatives of universal human nature.

It is first of all Eve who attracts our attention. She argues with Adam over the division of work. Her dissatisfaction, doubts and complaints are familiar thinking processes of

human psychic make up. The complaining wife tries to convince her contended husband that their work to maintain the Garden of Eden is beyond their capacity that all their efforts to keep the garden well-trimmed have failed, hence, there is pressing desirability to divide their labours. The important thing to note is the presence of germs of evil in Eve's mind, which is another, proof of her being a real human being. She, on the one hand, calls God unjust by complaining of excessive work while on the other hand, finds faults with Divine Plan, which enjoins them to work together. In short, her complaints and suggestions are natural to human mind.

Adam's disagreement corresponds to the thinking of the typical God fearing human being. His arguments are sensible and logical but they are thoroughly coloured with religious sentiments like a gentle husband, he advises Eve not to criticize Divine Scheme because it is not binding on them to keep on working and to do nothing else. He further expresses his apprehension like a true Christian. He thinks that the 'crafty importer' would prefer to seduce one of them instead of seducing both. It is worth noting that Adam is too gentle to attract reader's attention. Unlike Eve, he loves to live a life of obedience and submission. At the same time, Adam has a noble disposition, but neither he is authoritative nor assertive. The reader gets some dim glimpses of his Uxuriousness (excessively devoted to one's wife).

Eve exposes typical female psychology by insisting upon her original plan. She wrongly interprets Adam by saying that if they confine themselves within a small area and remain all the time in a state of fear; their life cannot be called happy. Like a kind-hearted man, Adam reassures her that he does not doubt Eve's virtuosity. What he means to say is that union is strength; when together they would administer to withstand any trial easily. He idealizes Eve that it is in her presence, he feels stronger and more courageous.

Eve reveals obstinacy in her behaviour. She once again gives clear indication of the presence of germs of evil in her mind. She advances a novel argument that God has not made them so imperfectly that they should be incapable of meeting danger or temptation individually. The implication of Eve's argument is that if she fails to resist the temptation singly. It would mean that God made her imperfect. She becomes representative of universal human nature by showing her inclination towards evil. There is blend of both good and evil in Eve, though good dominates. Eve becomes more attractive human being than Adam as she behaves, talks and thinks, like an average human being.

Adam is more reasonable and convincing than Eve in his arguments. He rightly feels there is danger inherent in the fact that man may lose control over his own faculties or the devil might drag him into fraud and deception through something that seems too good and fair and that freewill requires to be exercised under the constant control of reason. Thus instead of endorsing Eve's desire for independence and liberty he advises her to remain within the limits of divine rules and regulations. He knows that whosoever violates the human limits will be punished by God. His apprehensions are that of a true Christian. He also becomes a spokesman of human nature.

By now it becomes clear that exposure of human nature is central to "Paradise Lost". Both Adam and Eve are the proto-types of universal human nature. Hence, both are like human beings therefore attract our attention and appreciation.

Paradise Lost Book IX: Drama of fall of Adam and Eve

The climax of "Paradise Lost" is the fall of Adam and Eve. They become the victim of forbidden fruit, on the temptation of Satan. In the guise of serpent he secretly entered

the Garden of Eden in order to frustrate God's plan about the new creation. The whole of this episode is described in a dramatic and epic style. Exchange of dialogue, interaction of characters, suspense and the interplay of the feelings of frustration, independence, warning, partition, flattery, praise, benefits, tough reasoning, silent thinking taste, effect of fruit, pride, superiority, pathos, love, relish companionship with Eve, nakedness, lustfulness and quarrel are the sources of dramatic element in Book IX of "Paradise Lost". But the major source is the internal and external conflict of characters. It is important to note here that the element of epic grandeur is never lost.

The first dramatic situation is the scene when Eve advances her suggestion that she and Adam would accomplish more if they were to divide their labour. She also criticizes on the ground that the work, which they do in Paradise, is somewhat more than their capacities permit. Her dissatisfaction with the order of things is a pointer towards her tragic and ominous fall. Adam in his turn dismisses Eve's suggestion in a gentle way. He says that they are stronger when united. He also expresses his doubts about the wisdom of Eve's plan; she may be found by "the malicious foe". Hence, Adam insists that "the attempt itself" should be abided. Eve agrees about the existence of such an enemy but she is hurt at Adam's opinion that she could be shaken or reduced. The argument with Adam ends when he allows her to work independently whenever she likes. Adam is embarrassed where Eve is happy at her newfound independence.

This newfound emancipation is the concept of liberty, which has been a point of discussion for critics. As far as Milton is concerned, he does not approve of this kind of liberty. The event of the fall would not have taken place if Adam and Eve have remained together.

Moreover, separation of Adam and Eve is directly against God's plan that had devised an interdependent life programme for them. Violation of interdependent relationship becomes a tragic flaw. We compare this concept of liberty with the concept of liberty enunciated by Satan in Book 1, there is a clear-cut difference. Satan rebels against God on account of injured merit. He thinks that God was rewarding him in view of his qualities and merits. Satan's rebellion germinates from his intense hatred for God. He prefers to reign in hell than serve in Heaven, Satan's concept of liberty is, in short a, direct challenge to God's authority. On the other hand, the concept of liberty expressed in Book IX and enacted through the character of Eve is a matter of difference of opinion with God's way of doing things. If we take these two concepts of liberty together, one thing at least is sure that God does not approve any of these.

The next scene portrays Satan and Eve. Here the drama is at its height. If the scene with Adam is exposition, the scene with Satan is the development of action. Finding Eve alone at the early hours of the day, Satan becomes happy and makes his way towards her. Milton writes about Satan's advancements in descriptive. This descriptive passage serves the purpose of pause in action and enhances the effect of suspense because it prepares us for the great events that are to follow. Reaching Eve, Satan flatters her in the manner of a court poet. Satan tells her that she is a

"Goddess among gods".

Eve is flattered by her praise but at the same moment she is surprised at the serpent's capacity for speech. She becomes curious and desires to know more about the reptile's power of speech. This gives Satan an opportunity to continue his dialogue with her. He gives an account how he came to eat the fruit of "A godly Tree". He describes the physical as well as intellectual pleasures, which he got from the fruit of that tree. Eve is compelled by her inquisitive nature and she asks him to show her the tree. On seeing the tree Eve bends her head because it was the forbidden tree. Eve tells the serpent that she has been forbidden to taste its fruit. Here the serpent shows a great psychological

understanding of the character of Eve. He delivers a powerful rhetorical speech. He turns his attention away from Eve to the tree, itself. Headdresses the tree in the following words:

"O sacred, wise and wisdom-giving plant. Mother of Science…"

In this way he withdraws his pressure from Eve for a moment, but at once catches her and starts with his usual manner of flattery.

He calls her "Queen of this universe" and informs her that there is no need to believe in the threats of death. The serpent traps her in his arguments in such a way that there is no way out left for her. He asks her if the tree offers knowledge of good how can it be just of God to refuse such knowledge. And if it offers knowledge of evil, why they should be effused since one Evil is known, it may be "easier to shun".

He further tells her that God would praise their courage for eating the fruit of this tree. Eve is completely nonplussed at the argument of the famous temptation speech. But before committing the fatal sin, she pauses and thinks. Her thinking at that moment is a kind of soliloquy. What she reasons out is much more effective than the temptation speech of Satan. She argues that the prohibition is unreasonable since it prevents her from judging the very problem, which it raises. Ignorance of evil keeps her away from the full importance of goodness. But the irony is that her conclusion is based on Satan's lie that he had tasted the forbidden fruit. She unmindful of all things plucks the fruit and greedily eats it. The immediate effect of eating the fruit is that there is an upheaval of Nature, which sighs through all his works.

Nevertheless, it is Satan's encounter with Eve that Milton has exposed some of the prominent facets of human nature namely internal and external conflict between opposing forces, curiosity, vanity, love of flattery, self-projection, self-interest, failure to distinguish between the appearance and reality, greed etc. Since most of these aspects of human nature, we find in Eve's personality, she appears more attractive than Adam. She is closer to normal, average and common human beings.

Paradise Lost Book IX: The Temptation Scene and its Implication in the Development of Paradise Lost

Satan is a con artist of a very high order. He adopts the right channel to seduce Eve. He flatters her in the persuasive manner. That Eve is trapped to Satan and it does not seem unnatural. His attack is well planned and well executed. Eve's failure to see beyond false appearance is the predicament of almost each and every human being.

Satan hypnotizes Eve and succeeds in bringing her reason under his control by yelling fibs that his comprehension got sound and his vision broadened after he tasted the forbidden fruit. Accordingly, her curiosity inflated to the maximum. Like Faustus, she surrenders and gladly submits to Satan's guidance. Her response or reaction is not surprising though it is shocking and painful.

It is an open secret that in the course of their life the human beings get strayed and run after false, illusive and hollow ideals. "Paradise Lost" is fundamentally a poem about the nature of man.

The last act of the drama of fall also depicts several shades of human nature. It is once again Eve who becomes Milton's mouthpiece. After tasting the forbidden fruit on the one hand, she develops a sense of superiority while on the other hand exposes typical female

jealously. She is worried that if death comes and claims her life. Adam might marry another Eve.

On catching sight of Eve with a branch of tree of knowledge in her hand, Adam's temptation is different from that of Eve. In Adam's case his passions overrule his reason. He tastes the forbidden fruit out of sheer love for Eve. His act of disobedience confirms him a real human being of flesh and blood. Afterwards, their last sexual act bickering, realization, shedding of tears, feeling of remorse and repentance are typical to human beings.

Milton: Treatment of woman in "Paradise Lost"

Adam and Eve are the very first human couple and the parents of the whole human race and the masterpiece of God's art of creation, primarily lived in Eden which is an indescribable beautiful garden in Heaven. God had given them the liberty to enjoy everything available there, with only one restriction that they were not to eat the forbidden fruit there, but they could not act upon this curb, therefore, God punished them for their disobedience and expelled them from Paradise.

When we make a careful and critical analysis of "Paradise Lost" Book IX, we discover that in spite of having many common features of character and personality both Adam and Eve have a world of difference between them as well. Both of them are made of clay, have steadfast faith in God and equally love each other yet at the same time they are divided in opinion about their work, passion and the fear of an enemy.

As far as Eve is concerned, she possesses female charm and attraction, a suggestive and justifying mind, a rational and convincing manner of conversation, but at the same time she is highly confident, short sighted, jealous and deluded about her powers.

Adam, on the other hand, is an embodiment of sagacity, moderation, contentment, foresightedness, knowledge, mankind, passionate love and sacrifice.

When Eve rationally suggests that they should work separately because when they are together, they waste most of their time in petty things. Adam foresightedly objects the idea and reminds her of the danger of her being seduced by Satan. At this, she pounces upon him for suspecting her faithfulness. She also under-estimates their enemy. Adam tries his best to convince her that they should not separate from each other but she remains unmoved. At last, he retreats and reluctantly allows her to work after her own heart and, thus, they part from each other for the very first time and this very alienation, in fact, leads to their expulsion from Heaven.

Satan, who possesses a great determination and an unyielding power and ever-scheming mind, is, in fact, afraid to face Adam because of his physical strength, intellectual powers, great courage and impressive manlihood. He, therefore, is always in search of an opportunity to find Eve alone, so that, he may succeed in his evil and revengeful designs against God and His master creature. After assuming the shape of a serpent, which is the most cunning of all animals, he managed to enter Eden where he finds his target, that Eve is all alone, busy with her work. He very cleverly starts praising and flattering her that she is "the sole mistress", "the queen of this universe", "the empress" and "the humane goddess". When she, in the state of utter amazement, asks him how he can speak while he is a serpent he relates a fake story of his tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge and its miraculous effects.

When she tells him about the warning of God that tasting the fruit of knowledge could result in death, he washes her brain by saying that this fruit will raise her to the stature

of God and that she will not die because he is a living example before her eyes. She is fully entrapped by the oily tongue of Satan, tastes the forbidden fruit due to short sightedness and over confidence. After eating the fruit she thinks if she dies, God will create another Eve for Adam and he will live a long life of everlasting enjoyment with the new Eve. This very thought arises in her an intense feeling of jealousy for the first time and she mounts to Adam to tell him about her blunder.

On the other side, Adam restlessly waits for her with garland of beautiful and attractive flowers to welcome her back, but she does not reach at the fixed time. He goes out in search of her and finds her on the way with a bough of apples in her hand. She tells him all about the talking-serpent and her act of tasting the forbidden fruit. Adam leaves a deep sigh of grief and scolds her, but at the same time his passionate love for Eve over powers him and he expresses his uncontrollable sentiments of love in the following famous romantic and emotional words:

The link of nature draw me; flesh of my flash,
Bone of my bone, thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted; bliss or woe.

Thus Adam also eats the forbidden fruit deliberately just for the sake of his love for Eve for Adam feels himself incomplete without Eve. Thus he prefers a woman to obedience of God.

In the end, we can conclude that both Adam and Eve are responsible for their sin of disobedience and their consequent expulsion from Heaven. It is, however, clear that Eve is entrapped by the glib-tongue and the praising words of Satan while Adam falls a prey to his passionate love for Eve in the Victorian style, but she develops it in a new direction.

"Oh goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done, and occasioned; or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring;
To God more glory, more good-will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound."

Milton: Pandemoniun in "Paradise Lost"

0 John Milton, Poetry 2:59:00 AM



Some angels rushed towards a nearby hill, Pandemonium, a hill not far from there that emerged fire and smoke. All the rest of the hill shone with a bright crust, which was a sure sign that in its interior was buried metallic ore or sulphur. Towards that hill a company of numerous angels moved with great haste like groups of miners, hurrying in advance of the royal army to dig trenches in some battlefield or to build a fortification.

Those angels were guided thither by Mammon. He first taught human beings to pillage the earth, in order to obtain treasures buried. Soon had his companion made a huge opening in the hill and dug out large pieces of gold.

Let nobody feel surprised by the riches that exist in Hell. The soil of Hell perhaps is most appropriate for gold. And here let those who boast of human achievements and who describe, with a feeling of wonder, the Tower of Babel and the Pyramids of Egypt, learn how the greatest monuments, which have been built by human strength and skill and which have become famous, are easily surpassed by the work of worthless Spirits who can do in an hour what countless human beings, with unceasing labour, can hardly accomplish in a long period of time.

Nearby on the plain a second large group angles prepared many cells beneath which burns liquid fire. With wonderful art they melted the massive ore, separating each metal, and skimmed the scum or the impurities. A third group of angels had, with equal promptitude, set up, within the ground, moulds of various kinds and shapes, and filled each hollow recess with the melted gold transported there from the cells by a wonderful device.

Soon out of the earth, a huge structure emerged like a mist. This structure was built like a temple. It was set with round-shaped columns. It had pillars of the Doric style of architecture and the pillars were overlaid with a golden beam. Nor was there lacking cornice or frieze inscribed with sculptures in relief. The roof was carved with gold. Neither Babylon nor Cairo ever attained such splendour in all their glory, even in building temples dedicated to their gods. The rising structure now became complete, having reached its full and impressive height, and at once the doors, opening their brassy leaves, revealed over a wide area within, large spaces on the smooth and level pavement. From the arched roof, many rows of star-like lamps and bright fire-baskets hung as if by some mysterious magic. These lamps were fed with naphtha and asphaltus, and their light fell as if form a sky.

The multitude of angles entered the building hastily, admiring it. Some of them praised the building and some praised the architect. This architect’s sill was known in Heaven by a large number of high buildings, having towers, where angels holding their rods of authority dwelt and sat, like princes whom the supreme ruler, God, had raised to such power and to each of whom He had given the authority to rule according to his status and rank. The name of this architect was also well-known and much respected in ancient Greece; and in Italy he was known by the name of Mulciber. It was told in a fable how this architect had fallen from heaven, having been thrown by angry Jove clean over the bright walls. He had kept falling from morning to noon, and from noon to dewy evening, for the whole of a summer’s day; and with the setting sun he had alighted from the height, like a falling star, on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean sea. Such is the story people relate mistakenly because he, with that rebellious throng of angles, had fallen from Heaven long before that. Nor was it of any use to him now that he had erected building with high towers in Heaven. Not could he escape from his present fate in spite of all his contrivances, but was thrown headlong with his hard-working companion to build a palace for Satan and his followers in Hell.

Milton: Hell in "Paradise Lost"

0 John Milton, Poetry 3:02:00 AM



This is how Milton describes Hell as Satan sees it after his fall from Heaven:

At once, as far as Angles ken, he views

The dismal situation waste and wild:

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,

As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible

Served only to discover sights of woe,

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace

And rest can never dwell, hope never comes

That comes at all; but torture without end

Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed

With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.

Such place Eternal Justice had prepared

For those rebellious; here their prison set,

As fat removed from God and light of Heaven

As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.

Oh how unlike the place from whence they fell!

This description is brief but vivid and effective. We are to visualize a region which is sinister, barren and wild. The place is a horrible dungeon or pit burning like a huge furnace. Yet from the burning flames comes no light. The flames give out just as much light as is needed to make the darkness visible. The flames of Hell give no light. All around him Satan discerns sights of misery and unhappy dark spaces, where peace and rest can never dwell. It is a place where even hope which comes to all beings, is never felt. This region is far away from God. The contrast between this place and the Heaven conveyed to us is:

Oh how unlike the place from whence they fell!

The place is perpetually afflicted with “floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire”.

Thus Milton's Hell is a place of darkness where flickering light of fire serves only to make more dark. Geologically it is a volcanic region, “fed with ever-burning sulphur” in inexhaustible quantities. Satan and his followers have fallen into a “fiery gulf”, a lake that burns constantly

with liquid fire. The shore of this lake marks the beginning of a plain to which Satan flies after raising himself from the lake.

----------------------------- till on dry land

He lights—if it were land that ever burned

With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,

And such appeared in hue, as when the force

Of subterranean wind transports a hill

Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side

Of thundering Aetna, whose combustible

And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire

Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds

And leave a singed bottom al involved

With stench and smoke:

This means that in one case it is "liquid fire", and in the other "solid fire". The heat of the land is naturally as intense as is that of the boiling lake. Satan walks uncomfortably over the boiling soil. Heat is everywhere. In the background, we are later told, is a volcanic mountain:

There stood a hill not far, whose grisly top

Belched fire and rolling smoke, the rest entire

Shone with a glossy scurf—undoubted sign

That in his womb was hid metallic ore,

The work of sulphur.

All these description are certainly terrifying. Milton's object in describing Hell is two-fold; firstly, to indicate the torments which the fallen angels have to endure in contrast to the bliss and joy of Heaven which they have lost for ever; and, secondly, to infuse a feeling of horror in the readers. The modern reader, with his scientific background and scientific notions, may not feel as awed or horrified by these descriptions as readers of Milton's time might have felt. But even the modern reader has to recognize, not only the graphic quality of the description, but its oppressive and overwhelming effect.

The size of Hell, the nature of its tortures or the degree of heat that Satan feels, such thing can be felt to the reader's imagination, simulated by words which carry frightening associations for all of us. Hell is a place of absolute darkness, fierce heat, hostile elements and most terrible sight of all, the entire space is "valued with fire". Its all-enclosing dreadfulness typifies the dwarfing awareness of remorse, distance from God and pain from which its inhabitants cannot escape. Though terrible it is not formless; sea and land exist and from its soil the precious metals are refined which go into the construction of Pandemonium.



ALEXANDER POPE

Satire's my weapon, but I'm too discreet
To run amuck, and tilt at all I meet.

The Augustan Age

Introduction: - According to Hudson the epithet —Augustan was applied as a term of high praise, because the Age of Augustus was the golden age of Latin literature, so the Age of Pope was the golden age of English literature. This epithet serves to bring out the analogy between the first half of the eighteenth century and the Latin literature of the days of Virgil and Horace. In both cases writers were largely dependent upon powerful patrons. In both case a critical spirit prevailed. In both cases the literature produced by a thoroughly artificial society was a literature, not of free creative effort and inspiration, but of self-conscious and deliberate art. It is also known as the —classic age. Hudson writes: The epithet —classic, we may take to denote, first that the poets and critics of this age believed that the writers of classical antiquity presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste, and secondly, in a more general way, that, like these Latin writers, they had little faith in the promptings and guidance of individual genius, and much in laws and rules imposed by the authority of the past. Some remarkable political and social changes began to take place in England during the closing years of William III and the accession of Queen Anne (1702). That had a great impact on the development of literature during this period. The literature of this era was partly new and partly a continuance of that of the Restoration.

This age may be divided into two periods: the first stretching from 1700 to 1750 in the neo-classic Age, and the second, the transitional period which spans from 1750 to 1798. The classical tendencies lost their hold during the second period and there was a transition from classicism to romanticism. The period of transition is also known as the Age of Gray and Collins.

Political and Social Milieu: - Politically, this age witnessed the rise of two political parties: the Whigs and the Tories. Their political opinions and programmes were sharply divided. The Whig party stood for the pre-eminence of personal freedom and the Tory party supported the royal Divine Right. The Tories objected to the foreign wars because they had to pay taxes to prolong them, while the trading class Whigs favoured the continuance of war because it contributed to their prosperity. In order to propagate their ideologies and programmes both the parties utilized the services of literary men. And the politicians bribed the authors to join one or the other political party. The politicians took the authors into their confidence. Thus began the age of literary patronage. Consequently, most of the writers showed a strong political bias. It was, in other words, a party literature. Literature was honoured not for itself but for the sake of the party. The politics of the period helped to make it an age of political pamphleteering. And the writers were too willing to make the most of it. In order to get prominence in political struggle both parties issued a large number of periodicals. The periodicals were the mouthpieces of their respective political opinions. Thus began the age of journalism and periodical essay. The rise of periodical writing allowed great scope to the development of the literary talent of prose writers of the time. The real prose style—neat, simple, clear and lucid— was evolved during this period. In the words of Albert: "It was the golden age of political pamphleteering and the writer made the most of it".

Coffee Houses and Literary Activities: - People were keenly interested in political activity. A number of clubs and coffee houses came into existence. They became the centers of fashionable and public life. The Coffee houses were dominated by either of the parties. A Whig would never go to a Tory Coffee house and Vice Versa. The Coffee houses were the haunts of prominent writers, thinkers, artists, intellectuals and

politicians. They figured prominently in the writings of the day. The Coffee houses gave rise to purely literary associations, such as the famous Scribblers and Kit-cat clubs. In the first number of The Tattler, Richard Steele announced that the activities of his new Journal would be based upon the clubs. The discussions in coffee houses took place in polished, refined, elegant, easy and lucid style. Thus coffee houses also contributed to the evolution of prose style during the eighteenth century.

Interest in Reading and Publishing Houses: - The rising interest in politics witnessed the decline of drama. It resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of reading public. Consequently a large number of men took interest in publishing translations, adaptations and other popular works of the time. They became the forerunners of modern public houses. They employed hack writers (the writers who write for money without worrying about the quality of their writing) of the period. They lived in miserable hovels in the Grub Street.

The Rise of the Middle Class: - This period of literature saw the emergence of a powerful middle class. The supremacy of the middle class made it an age of tolerance, moderation and common sense. It sought to refine manners, and introduce into life the rule of sweet reasonableness. The church also pursued a middle way and the religious life was free form strife and fanaticism. The powerful dominance of the middle classes led to moral regeneration in the eighteenth century. The people were fast growing sick of the outrageousness of the Restoration period. People had begun once more to insist upon those basic decencies of life and moral considerations, which the previous generation had treated with contempt. The middle class writers were greatly influenced by moral considerations. Moreover, William III and Queen Anne were staunch supporters of morality. Addison in an early number of The Spectator puts the new tone in writing in his own admirable way: —I shall endeavor to enliven morality with wit and wit with morality. It was an era of the assimilation of the aristocracy and the middle class. The middle class appropriated classicism with its moralising needs. The emergence of middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings and emotions, which influenced the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Evangelical Movement: - Religion in the age of Pope was deistic, formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great Evangelical Revival, known as Methodism, led by Wesley and Whitefield, the old formalism and utilitarianism was abandoned. A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured into the Church and the common people. From 1739 the Evangelical Movement spread rapidly among the poor all over England, and it became particularly strong in the industrial towns.

Literary Characteristics of the Age: - The political and social changes exhibiting the supremacy of good sense, rationality, sanity and balance left an imperishable mark on the literature of the Age of Pope and Dr. Johnson. The literature of the period bore the hallmark of intelligence, of wit and of fancy, not a literature of emotion, passion, or creative energy. The main literary characteristics of the age are given below:

(a) Age of Prose and Reason: - It is an age of prose, reason, good sense and not of poetry. A large number of practical interests arising from the new social and political conditions demanded expression not simply in looks, but in pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task. Hence prose developed rapidly and excellently. Indeed, poetry itself became prosaic, as it was not used for creative works of imagination, but for essays, satires and criticism. The poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century as

represented by the works of Pope and Dr. Johnson is polished and witty but lacks fire, fine feeling, enthusiasm and imaginative appeal. In short, it interests us as a study of life but fails to delight or inspire us. Matthew Arnold rightly calls if the eighteenth century —an age of prose. The poetry of this period, according to Hudson, —lacked inevitably the depth and grasp of essential things which alone assure permanence in literature, and the quest for refinement in style resulted too often in stilted affectations and frigid conventionalism.

(b) Age of Satire: - The predominance of satire is an important literary characteristic of the age. Nearly every writer of the first half of the eighteenth century was used and rewarded by Whigs or Tories for satirising their enemies and for advancing their special political interests. Pope was an exception but he too was a satirist par excellence. W. J. Long writes: —Now satire—that is a literary work which searches out the faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule—is at best a destructive type of criticism. A satirist is like a labourer who clears away the ruins and rubbish of an old house before the architect and builders begin on a new and beautiful structure. The work may sometime be necessary, but it rarely arouses our enthusiasm. While the satires of Pope, place them with our great literature, which is always constructive in spirit; and we have the feeling that all these men were capable of better things than they ever wrote.

(c) Age of Neo-Classicism: - The Age of Pope and Johnson is often called the neo-classic age. We should clearly understand the meaning of the word —classic. The term —classic refers to writers of highest rank in any nation. It was first applied to the works of Greek and Roman writers like Homer and Virgil. In English literature any writer who followed the simple, noble and inspiring method of these writers was said to have a classic style. Period marked by a number of celebrated writers who produce literature of a very high order, is also called the classic period of a nation�much literature. The age of Augustus is the classic age of Rome. The age of Dante is the classic age of Italian literature. The age of the classic age is like those of Homer and Virgil. The writers of this period disregarded Elizabethan literary trends. They demanded that their poetry should comply with exact rules. In this respect they were influenced by French writers, especially by Boileau, who insisted on precise rules of writing poetry. They professed to have discovered their rules in the classics of Aristotle and Horace. Dryden, Pope and Johnson pioneered the revival of classicism which conformed to rules established by the great writers of other nations. They preferred only set rules to the depth and seriousness of subject matter. They ignored creativity, depth, vigour and freshness of expression. The true classicist pays equal consideration to the depth and seriousness of subject matter, and the perfect and flawless expression. The neo-classicist disregards the subject matter expresses the hackneyed and commonplace subjects in a polished and finished style modelled on the stylistic patterns of ancient writers. Grierson in his famous book The Background of English Literature asserts that the hallmark of ancient classical literature is a harmonious balance between form and substance. This harmonious balance between form and substance was disturbed in the Age of Pope and Johnson. The writers of this period care for form, not for the weight of matter. They care only for manner, for artistic finish and polish, but not for genuine poetic inspiration. The content thought and feeling are subordinated to form.

(d) Age of Good Sense: - Good sense is one of the central characteristics of the literature of this period. In the words of W. H. Hudson: —Good sense became the ideal of the time, and good sense meant a love of the reasonable and the useful and a hatred of the mystical, the extravagant and the visionary.

(e) Follow Nature: - Another important characteristic of the age was the belief that literature must follow nature. Pope wrote in The Essay on Criticism:

The rules of old discover'd, not devis'd,

Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd;

Nature like Liberty is but restrained

By the same laws which first herself ordain'd

. . . . . .

Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem

The follow Nature is to follow them.

By nature the Augustans meant to copy man and manners of society. Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man". Addison also wrote "Wit and fine writing consist not so much —in advancing things that are new, as in things that are known, an agreeable turn".

(f) Town and City Life as a Theme of Literature: - Another feature of the literature of the age is that it has a limited theme. It is a literature of the town and the fashionable upper circles of the city of London. Pope, Johnson, Addison, Steele etc., though urban in outlook and temperament, show remarkable interest in the middle classes and, thus, broaden the scope of literature. The theme of literature before them was strictly confined to fashionable and aristocratic circles. In the works of middle class writers classicism shows itself slightly coloured by a moralising and secretly sentimental intension.

(g) The Heroic Couplet and the Poetic Diction as Tools of Writers: - The use of heroic couplet was predominant during this period. The heroic couplet was recognised as the only medium for poetic expression. In it the poets put all the skill and wrote with an unimaginable correctness and precision. The language of poetry became gaudy and inane. The common words or ordinary language were deliberately kept out from poetic literature. The result was that literature of the Augustan Age became artificial, rational and intellectual.

Alexander Pope as a Poet

Alexander Pope was born in London on May 21, 1688, disadvantaged from the start by being born into a Roman Catholic family (at a time when Catholics were severely restricted in their liberty and property by the English government). Barred from an English university education by his religion, he nevertheless received some schooling at a couple of Catholic institutions, but soon supplemented this with his own extensive reading in Greek and Latin authors. He began writing verse by doing translations of

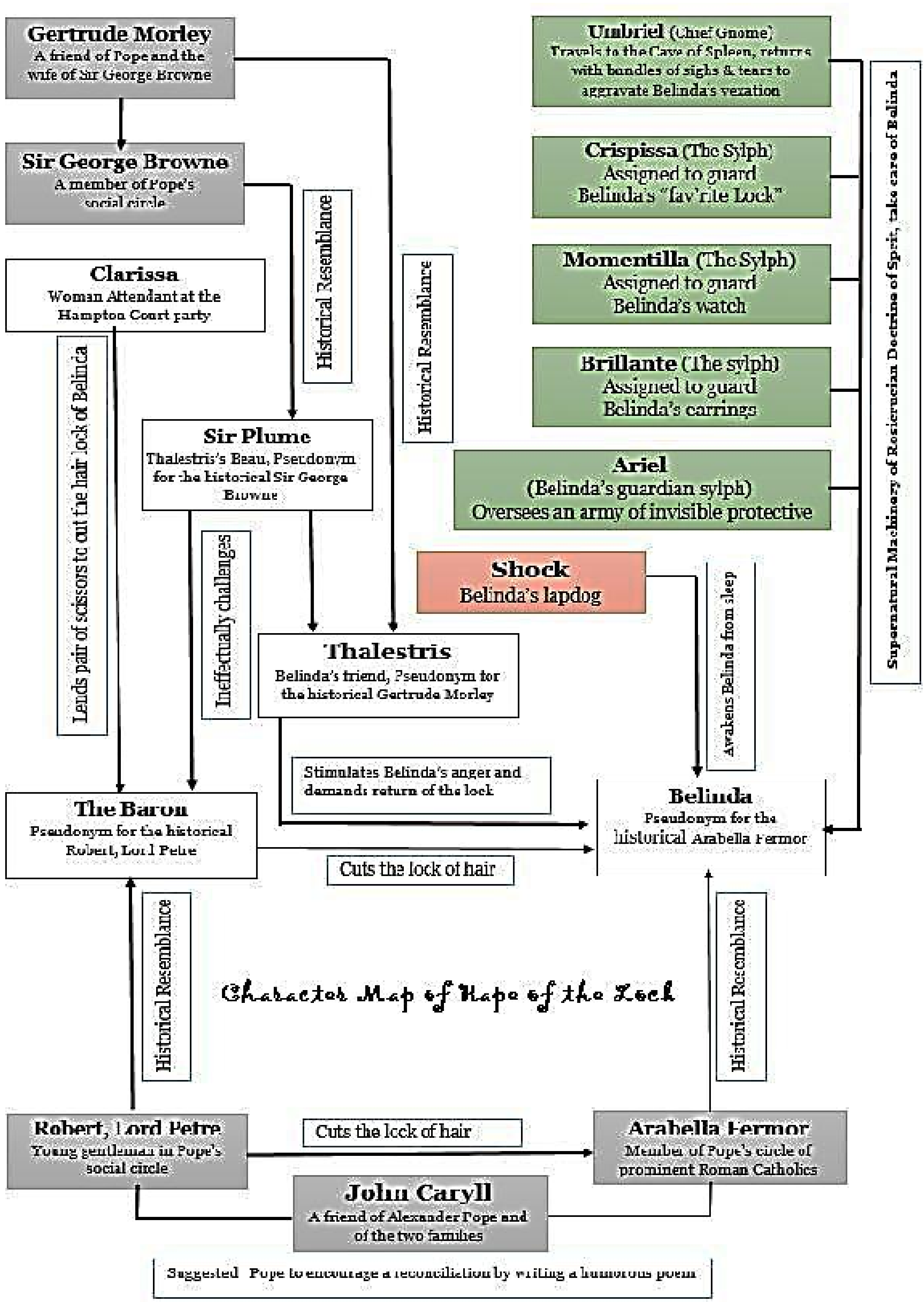
these authors, and imitations and adaptations of others such as Chaucer, Waller, and Cowley.

Pope is by far the most important poetic figure of the age called after him (1700-1740). His importance lies in the fact that he exercised the greatest influence on the classical poetry of the century. His poetry was intellectual, didactic and satiric, and was almost written in heroic couplet. It is never of the highest class, but within its limits, it stands unrivalled in the language

Pseudo Classicist: - The true classicism is meant to be a combination of poetic ardor and excellence of form. In Pope the true poetic ardor and energy is absent but he is exceedingly careful about the technique of form and style. When we look at the contents of Pope's poetry we do not find anything worthwhile. Satire, didactic poetry, and a flimsy mock-heroic poem---are all his poetic achievements. They are mere products of intellect, and artificially constructed; they do not reproduce true classical spirit. Hence it is not correct to describe Pope as a true classicist. (Milton, with his poetic impulse and perfection of form, is a true classicist.) The classicism of Pope is the shadow of classicism; it is false or pseudo-classicism.

Intellectual Poetry: - Pope's poetry was of his age, and it reflected in full measure the spirit of the age. It is intellectual and its appeal is to the mind rather than to the heart. It is full of wit and epigram, the brilliancy of which is unsurpassed. Pope is next to Shakespeare, in contributing quotable lines of verse, which are remarkable for their pregnancy, neatness and brevity. Here are some of his famous quotes.

To err is human, to forgive divine.
Never elated when someone's oppressed,
Never dejected when another one's blessed.
We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow.
Our wiser sons, no doubt will think us so.
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.



The Rape of the Lock: Summary

Canto 1 : Summary

The Rape of the Lock begins with a passage outlining the subject of the poem and invoking the aid of the muse. Then the sun ("Sol") appears to initiate the leisurely morning routines of a wealthy household. Lapdogs shake themselves awake, bells begin to ring, and although it is already noon, Belinda still sleeps. She has been dreaming, and we learn that the dream has been sent by "her guardian Sylph," Ariel. The dream is of a handsome youth who tells her that she is protected by "unnumber'd Spirits"—an army of supernatural beings who once lived on earth as human women. The youth explains that they are the invisible guardians of women's chastity, although the credit is usually mistakenly given to "Honour" rather than to their divine stewardship. Of these Spirits, one particular group—the Sylphs, who dwell in the air—serve as Belinda's personal guardians; they are devoted, lover-like, to any woman that "rejects mankind," and they understand and reward the vanities of an elegant and frivolous lady like Belinda. Ariel, the chief of all Belinda's puckish protectors, warns her in this dream that "some dread event" is going to befall her that day, though he can tell her nothing more specific than that she should "beware of Man!" Then Belinda awakes, to the licking tongue of her lapdog, Shock. Upon the delivery of a billet-doux, or love-letter, she forgets all about the dream. She then proceeds to her dressing table and goes through an elaborate ritual of dressing, in which her own image in the mirror is described as a "heavenly image," a "goddess." The Sylphs, unseen, assist their charge as she prepares herself for the day's activities.

Commentary

The opening of the poem establishes its mock-heroic style. Pope introduces the conventional epic subjects of love and war and includes an invocation to the muse and a dedication to the man (the historical John Caryll) who commissioned the poem. Yet the tone already indicates that the high seriousness of these traditional topics has suffered a diminishment. The second line confirms in explicit terms what the first line already suggests: the "am'rous causes" the poem describes are not comparable to the grand love of Greek heroes but rather represent a trivialized version of that emotion. The "contests" Pope alludes to will prove to be "mighty" only in an ironic sense. They are card-games and flirtatious tussles, not the great battles of epic tradition. Belinda is not, like Helen of Troy, "the face that launched a thousand ships" , but rather a face that—although also beautiful—prompts a lot of foppish nonsense. The first two verse-paragraphs emphasize the comic inappropriateness of the epic style (and corresponding mind-set) to the subject at hand. Pope achieves this discrepancy at the level of the line and half-line; the reader is meant to dwell on the incompatibility between the two sides of his parallel formulations. Thus, in this world, it is "little men" who in "tasks so bold... engage"; and "soft bosoms" are the dwelling-place for "mighty rage." In this startling juxtaposition of the petty and the grand, the former is real while the latter is ironic. In mock-epic, the high heroic style works not to dignify the subject but rather to expose and ridicule it. Therefore, the basic irony of the style supports the substance of the poem's satire, which attacks the misguided values of a society that takes small matters for serious ones while failing to attend to issues of genuine importance.

With Belinda's dream, Pope introduces the "machinery" of the poem—the supernatural powers that influence the action from behind the scenes. Here, the sprites that watch over Belinda are meant to mimic the gods of the Greek and Roman traditions, who are sometimes benevolent and sometimes malicious, but always intimately involved in

earthly events. The scheme also makes use of other ancient hierarchies and systems of order. Ariel explains that women's spirits, when they die, return "to their first Elements." Each female personality type (these types correspond to the four humours) is converted into a particular kind of sprite. These gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and nymphs, in turn, are associated with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. The airy sylphs are those who in their lifetimes were "light Coquettes"; they have a particular concern for Belinda because she is of this type, and this will be the aspect of feminine nature with which the poem is most concerned.

Indeed, Pope already begins to sketch this character of the "coquette" in this initial canto. He draws the portrait indirectly, through characteristics of the Sylphs rather than of Belinda herself. Their priorities reveal that the central concerns of womanhood, at least for women of Belinda's class, are social ones. Woman's "joy in gilded Chariots" indicates an obsession with pomp and superficial splendor, while "love of Ombre," a fashionable card game, suggests frivolity. The erotic charge of this social world in turn prompts another central concern: the protection of chastity. These are women who value above all the prospect marrying to advantage, and they have learned at an early age how to promote themselves and manipulate their suitors without compromising themselves. The Sylphs become an allegory for the mannered conventions that govern female social behavior. Principles like honor and chastity have become no more than another part of conventional interaction. Pope makes it clear that these women are not conducting themselves on the basis of abstract moral principles, but are governed by an elaborate social mechanism—of which the Sylphs cut a fitting caricature. And while Pope's technique of employing supernatural machinery allows him to critique this situation, it also helps to keep the satire light and to exonerate individual women from too severe a judgment. If Belinda has all the typical female foibles, Pope wants us to recognize that it is partly because she has been educated and trained to act in this way. The society as a whole is as much to blame as she is. Nor are men exempt from this judgment. The competition among the young lords for the attention of beautiful ladies is depicted as a battle of vanity, as "wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive." Pope's phrases here expose an absurd attention to exhibitions of pride and ostentation. He emphasizes the inanity of discriminating so closely between things and people that are essentially the same in all important (and even most unimportant) respects.

Pope's portrayal of Belinda at her dressing table introduces mock-heroic motifs that will run through the poem. The scene of her toilette is rendered first as a religious sacrament, in which Belinda herself is the priestess and her image in the looking glass is the Goddess she serves. This parody of the religious rites before a battle gives way, then, to another kind of mock-epic scene, that of the ritualized arming of the hero. Combs, pins, and cosmetics take the place of weapons as "awful Beauty puts on all its arms."

Canto 2 : Summary

Belinda, rivaling the sun in her radiance, sets out by boat on the river Thames for Hampton Court Palace. She is accompanied by a party of glitzy ladies ("Nymphs") and gentlemen, but is far and away the most striking member of the group. Pope's description of her charms includes "the sparkling Cross she wore" on her "white breast," her "quick" eyes and "lively looks," and the easy grace with which she bestows her smiles and attentions evenly among all the adoring guests. Her crowning glories, though, are the two ringlets that dangle on her "iv'ry neck." These curls are described as love's

labyrinths, specifically designed to ensnare any poor heart who might get entangled in them.

One of the young gentlemen on the boat, the Baron, particularly admires Belinda's locks, and has determined to steal them for himself. We read that he rose early that morning to build an altar to love and pray for success in this project. He sacrificed several tokens of his former affections, including garters, gloves, and billet-doux (love-letters). He then prostrated himself before a pyre built with "all the trophies of his former loves," fanning its flames with his "am'rous sighs." The gods listened to his prayer but decided to grant only half of it.

As the pleasure-boat continues on its way, everyone is carefree except Ariel, who remembers that some bad event has been foretold for the day. He summons an army of sylphs, who assemble around him in their iridescent beauty. He reminds them with great ceremony that one of their duties, after regulating celestial bodies and the weather and guarding the British monarch, is "to tend the Fair": to keep watch over ladies' powders, perfumes, curls, and clothing, and to "assist their blushes, and inspire their airs." Therefore, since "some dire disaster" threatens Belinda, Ariel assigns her an extensive troop of bodyguards. Brillante is to guard her earrings, Momentilla her watch, and Crispissa her locks. Ariel himself will protect Shock, the lapdog. A band of fifty Sylphs will guard the all-important petticoat. Ariel pronounces that any sylph who neglects his assigned duty will be severely punished. They disperse to their posts and wait for fate to unfold.

Commentary

From the first, Pope describes Belinda's beauty as something divine, an assessment which she herself corroborates in the first canto when she creates, at least metaphorically, an altar to her own image. This praise is certainly in some sense ironical, reflecting negatively on a system of public values in which external characteristics rank higher than moral or intellectual ones. But Pope also shows a real reverence for his heroine's physical and social charms, claiming in lines 17–18 that these are compelling enough to cause one to forget her "female errors." Certainly he has some interest in flattering Arabella Fermor, the real-life woman on whom Belinda is based; in order for his poem to achieve the desired reconciliation, it must not offend (see "Context". Pope also exhibits his appreciation for the ways in which physical beauty is an art form: he recognizes, with a mixture of censure and awe, the fact that Belinda's legendary locks of hair, which appear so natural and spontaneous, are actually a carefully contrived effect. In this, the mysteries of the lady's dressing table are akin, perhaps, to Pope's own literary art, which he describes elsewhere as "nature to advantage dress'd."

If the secret mechanisms and techniques of female beauty get at least a passing nod of appreciation from the author, he nevertheless suggests that the general human readiness to worship beauty amounts to a kind of sacrilege. The cross that Belinda wears around her neck serves a more ornamental than symbolic or religious function. Because of this, he says, it can be adored by "Jews" and "Infidels" as readily as by Christians. And there is some ambiguity about whether any of the admirers are really valuing the cross itself, or the "white breast" on which it lies—or the felicitous effect of the whole. The Baron, of course, is the most significant of those who worship at the altar of Belinda's beauty. The ritual sacrifices he performs in the pre-dawn hours are another mock-heroic element of the poem, mimicking the epic tradition of sacrificing to the gods before an important battle or journey, and drapes his project with an absurdly grand

import that actually only exposes its triviality. The fact that he discards all his other love tokens in these preparations reveals his capriciousness as a lover. Earnest prayer, in this parodic scene, is replaced by the self-indulgent sighs of the lover. By having the gods grant only half of what the Baron asks, Pope alludes to the epic convention by which the favor of the gods is only a mixed blessing: in epic poems, to win the sponsorship of one god is to incur the wrath of another; divine gifts, such as immortality, can seem a blessing but become a curse. Yet in this poem, the ramifications of a prayer "half" granted are negligible rather than tragic; it merely means that he will manage to steal just one lock rather than both of them.

In the first canto, the religious imagery surrounding Belinda's grooming rituals gave way to a militaristic conceit. Here, the same pattern holds. Her curls are compared to a trap perfectly calibrated to ensnare the enemy. Yet the character of female coyness is such that it seeks simultaneously to attract and repel, so that the counterpart to the enticing ringlets is the formidable petticoat. This undergarment is described as a defensive armament comparable to the Shield of Achilles and supported in its function of protecting the maiden's chastity by the invisible might of fifty Sylphs. The Sylphs, who are Belinda's protectors, are essentially charged to protect her not from failure but from too great a success in attracting men. This paradoxical situation dramatizes the contradictory values and motives implied in the era's sexual conventions.

In this canto, the sexual allegory of the poem begins to come into fuller view. The title of the poem already associates the cutting of Belinda's hair with a more explicit sexual conquest, and here Pope cultivates that suggestion. He multiplies his sexually metaphorical language for the incident, adding words like "ravish" and "betray" to the "rape" of the title. He also slips in some commentary on the implications of his society's sexual mores, as when he remarks that "when success a Lover's toil attends, / few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends." When Ariel speculates about the possible forms the "dire disaster" might take, he includes a breach of chastity ("Diana's law"), the breaking of china (another allusion to the loss of virginity), and the staining of honor or a gown (the two incommensurate events could happen equally easily and accidentally). He also mentions some pettier social "disasters" against which the Sylphs are equally prepared to fight, like missing a ball (here, as grave as missing prayers) or losing the lapdog. In the Sylphs' defensive efforts, Belinda's petticoat is the battlefield that requires the most extensive fortifications. This fact furthers the idea that the rape of the lock stands in for a literal rape, or at least represents a threat to her chastity more serious than just the mere theft of a curl.

Canto 3 : Summary

The boat arrives at Hampton Court Palace, and the ladies and gentlemen disembark to their courtly amusements. After a pleasant round of chatting and gossip, Belinda sits down with two of the men to a game of cards. They play ombre, a three-handed game of tricks and trumps, somewhat like bridge, and it is described in terms of a heroic battle: the cards are troops combating on the "velvet plain" of the card-table. Belinda, under the watchful care of the Sylphs, begins favorably. She declares spades as trumps and leads with her highest cards, sure of success. Soon, however, the hand takes a turn for the worse when "to the Baron fate inclines the field": he catches her king of clubs with his queen and then leads back with his high diamonds. Belinda is in danger of being beaten, but recovers in the last trick so as to just barely win back the amount she bid.

The next ritual amusement is the serving of coffee. The curling vapors of the steaming coffee remind the Baron of his intention to attempt Belinda's lock. Clarissa draws out her scissors for his use, as a lady would arm a knight in a romance. Taking up the scissors, he tries three times to clip the lock from behind without Belinda seeing. The Sylphs endeavor furiously to intervene, blowing the hair out of harm's way and tweaking her diamond earring to make her turn around. Ariel, in a last-minute effort, gains access to her brain, where he is surprised to find "an earthly lover lurking at her heart." He gives up protecting her then; the implication is that she secretly wants to be violated. Finally, the shears close on the curl. A daring sylph jumps in between the blades and is cut in two; but being a supernatural creature, he is quickly restored. The deed is done, and the Baron exults while Belinda's screams fill the air.

Commentary

This canto is full of classic examples of Pope's masterful use of the heroic couplet. In introducing Hampton Court Palace, he describes it as the place where Queen Anne "dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea." This line employs a zeugma, a rhetorical device in which a word or phrase modifies two other words or phrases in a parallel construction, but modifies each in a different way or according to a different sense. Here, the modifying word is "take"; it applies to the paralleled terms "counsel" and "tea." But one does not "take" tea in the same way one takes counsel, and the effect of the zeugma is to show the royal residence as a place that houses both serious matters of state and frivolous social occasions. The reader is asked to contemplate that paradox and to reflect on the relative value and importance of these two different registers of activity. (For another example of this rhetorical technique, see lines 157–8: "Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast, / when husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last.") A similar point is made, in a less compact phrasing, in the second and third verse-paragraphs of this canto. Here, against the gossip and chatter of the young lords and ladies, Pope opens a window onto more serious matters that are occurring "meanwhile" and elsewhere, including criminal trials and executions, and economic exchange.

The rendering of the card game as a battle constitutes an amusing and deft narrative feat. By parodying the battle scenes of the great epic poems, Pope is suggesting that the energy and passion once applied to brave and serious purposes is now expended on such insignificant trials as games and gambling, which often become a mere front for flirtation. The structure of "the three attempts" by which the lock is cut is a convention of heroic challenges, particularly in the romance genre. The romance is further invoked in the image of Clarissa arming the Baron—not with a real weapon, however, but with a pair of sewing scissors. Belinda is not a real adversary, or course, and Pope makes it plain that her resistance—and, by implication, her subsequent distress—is to some degree an affectation. The melodrama of her screams is complemented by the ironic comparison of the Baron's feat to the conquest of nations.

Canto 4 : Summary

Belinda's "anxious cares" and "secret passions" after the loss of her lock are equal to the emotions of all who have ever known "rage, resentment and despair." After the disappointed Sylphs withdraw, an earthy gnome called Umbriel flies down to the "Cave of Spleen." (The spleen, an organ that removes disease-causing agents from the bloodstream, was traditionally associated with the passions, particularly malaise; "spleen" is a synonym for "ill-temper.") In his descent he passes through Belinda's bedroom, where she lies prostrate with discomfiture and the headache. She is attended

by "two handmaidens," Ill-Nature and Affectation. Umbriel passes safely through this melancholy chamber, holding a sprig of "spleenwort" before him as a charm. He addresses the "Goddess of Spleen," and returns with a bag of "sighs, sobs, and passions" and a vial of sorrow, grief, and tears. He unleashes the first bag on Belinda, fueling her ire and despair.

There to commiserate with Belinda is her friend Thalestris. (In Greek mythology, Thalestris is the name of one of the Amazons, a race of warrior women who excluded men from their society.) Thalestris delivers a speech calculated to further foment Belinda's indignation and urge her to avenge herself. She then goes to Sir Plume, "her beau," to ask him to demand that the Baron return the hair. Sir Plume makes a weak and slang-filled speech, to which the Baron disdainfully refuses to acquiesce. At this, Umbriel releases the contents of the remaining vial, throwing Belinda into a fit of sorrow and self-pity. With "beauteous grief" she bemoans her fate, regrets not having heeded the dream-warning, and laments the lonely, pitiful state of her sole remaining curl.

Commentary

The canto opens with a list of examples of "rage, resentment, and despair," comparing on an equal footing the pathos of kings imprisoned in battle, of women who become old maids, of evil-doers who die without being saved, and of a woman whose dress is disheveled. By placing such disparate sorts of aggravation in parallel, Pope accentuates the absolute necessity of assigning them to some rank of moral import. The effect is to chastise a social world that fails to make these distinctions.

Umbriel's journey to the Cave of Spleen mimics the journeys to the underworld made by both Odysseus and Aeneas. Pope uses psychological allegory (for the spleen was the seat of malaise or melancholy), as a way of exploring the sources and nature of Belinda's feelings. The presence of Ill-nature and Affectation as handmaidens serves to indicate that her grief is less than pure ("affected" or put-on), and that her display of temper has hidden motives. We learn that her sorrow is decorative in much the same way the curl was; it gives her the occasion, for example, to wear a new nightdress.

The speech of Thalestris invokes a courtly ethic. She encourages Belinda to think about the Baron's misdeed as an affront to her honor, and draws on ideals of chivalry in demanding that Sir Plume challenge the Baron in defense of Belinda's honor. He makes a muddle of the task, showing how far from courtly behavior this generation of gentlemen has fallen. Sir Plume's speech is riddled with foppish slang and has none of the logical, moral, or oratorical power that a knight should properly wield.

This attention to questions of honor returns us to the sexual allegory of the poem. The real danger, Thalestris suggests, is that "the ravisher" might display the lock and make it a source of public humiliation to Belinda and, by association, to her friends. Thus the real question is a superficial one—public reputation—rather than the moral imperative to chastity. Belinda's own words at the close of the canto corroborate this suggestion; she exclaims,

> **"Oh, hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize**
> **Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!"** (The "hairs less in sight" suggest her pubic hair).

Pope is pointing out the degree to which she values outward appearance (whether beauty or reputation) above all else; she would rather suffer a breach to her integrity than a breach to her appearance.

Canto 5 : Summary

The Baron remains impassive against all the ladies' tears and reproaches. Clarissa delivers a speech in which she questions why a society that so adores beauty in women does not also place a value on "good sense" and "good humour." Women are frequently called angels, she argues, but without reference to the moral qualities of these creatures. Especially since beauty is necessarily so short-lived, we must have something more substantial and permanent to fall back on. This sensible, moralizing speech falls on deaf ears, however, and Belinda, Thalestris and the rest ignore her and proceed to launch an all-out attack on the offending Baron. A chaotic tussle ensues, with the gnome Umbriel presiding in a posture of self- congratulation. The gentlemen are slain or revived according to the smiles and frowns of the fair ladies. Belinda and the Baron meet in combat and she emerges victorious by peppering him with snuff and drawing her bodkin. Having achieved a position of advantage, she again demands that he return the lock. But the ringlet has been lost in the chaos, and cannot be found. The poet avers that the lock has risen to the heavenly spheres to become a star; stargazers may admire it now for all eternity. In this way, the poet reasons, it will attract more envy than it ever could on earth.

Commentary

Readers have often interpreted Clarissa's speech as the voice of the poet expressing the moral of the story. Certainly, her oration's thesis aligns with Pope's professed task of putting the dispute between the two families into a more reasonable perspective. But Pope's position achieves more complexity than Clarissa's speech, since he has used the occasion of the poem as a vehicle to critically address a number of broader societal issues as well. And Clarissa's righteous stance loses authority in light of the fact that it was she who originally gave the Baron the scissors. Clarissa's failure to inspire a reconciliation proves that the quarrel is itself a kind of flirtatious game that all parties are enjoying. The description of the "battle" has a markedly erotic quality, as ladies and lords wallow in their mock-agonies. Sir Plume "draw[s] Clarissa down" in a sexual way, and Belinda "flies" on her foe with flashing eyes and an erotic ardor. When Pope informs us that the Baron fights on unafraid because he "sought no more than on his foe to die," the expression means that his goal all along was sexual consummation.

This final battle is the culmination of the long sequence of mock-heroic military actions. Pope invokes by name the Roman gods who were most active in warfare, and he alludes as well to the Aeneid , comparing the stoic Baron to Aeneas ("the Trojan"), who had to leave his love to become the founder of Rome. Belinda's tossing of the snuff makes a perfect turning point, ideally suited to the scale of this trivial battle. The snuff causes the Baron to sneeze, a comic and decidedly unheroic thing for a hero to do. The bodkin, too, serves nicely: here a bodkin is a decorative hairpin, not the weapon of ancient days (or even of Hamlet's time). Still, Pope gives the pin an elaborate history in accordance with the conventions of true epic.

The mock-heroic conclusion of the poem is designed to complement the lady it alludes to (Arabella Fermor), while also giving the poet himself due credit for being the instrument of her immortality. This ending effectively indulges the heroine's vanity, even though the poem has functioned throughout as a critique of that vanity. And no real moral development has taken place: Belinda is asked to come to terms with her loss through a kind of bribe or distraction that reinforces her basically frivolous outlook. But even in its most mocking moments, this poem is a gentle one, in which Pope shows a basic

sympathy with the social world in spite of its folly and foibles. The searing critiques of his later satires would be much more stringent and less forgiving.

Critical Analysis of "The Rape of the Lock"

The occasion of the poem Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock was the quarrel between two aristocratic Roman Catholic families. Lord Petre, in a moment of youthful frolic had cut off a lock of hair from Miss Arabella's Fermor's head which caused a violent quarrel. The gentle satire was written to reconcile quarreling families.

Thus The Rape of the Lock was dedicated to Miss Arabelle Fermors belonging to a distinguished Catholic family. It was dedicated to her as it was to reconcile her family with that of Lord Petre who had cut off a lock hair from the lady's head which caused a violent quarrel.

Coming to the title the word Rape in the title means violence on women. In the poem no woman is the victim of rape but it is the lock of a woman named Belinda that is raped by a fashionable Baron. So, the title brings out the triviality of the subject-matter and is hence appropriate. Again the title of the poem bears literary reminiscent. The title is reminiscent of Shakespeare' Roman matron, Lucrece where the rape of the Roman matron Lucrece by Emperor Tarques arouses a most shameful and painful event. It also satirically refers to the rape of Helen of Sparta by Paris, the Trojan prince.

The poem also reflects the picture of the contemporary society. The Rape of the Lock mirrors eighteenth century elegant society and life in London with all it's the fashions, follies, frivolities and vices. The poem is a witty social document which mirrors false ideology. Morality intrigue debauchery corruption social scandals mostly sexual pleasure and fashion of the ladies the tawdriness of the morality of the beau-demon is revealed through the poem.

Pope in the manner of epic poets, Homer, Virgil and Milton, sets forth his mock epic with a proposition announcing the subject and in invocation to the muse to help him sing how a dreadful consequence arises from a love affair and a fierce quarrel results from a very trivial incident. However, Pope's The Rape of the Lock is a mock heroic poem which imitates the elaborate form and ceremonious style of the epic genre and it applies to a common place or trivial subject matter. Pope's The Rape of the Lock is the perfect of mock-heroic poem. The characteristics of a mock heroic poem -the discrepancy the triviality of the subject matter, the Invocation to the muse, epic similes, the sonorous and grand speeches, use of epic machinery, journey to the underworld the of amber a voyage on board are present here.

The proposition, the Invocation to the muse, epic machinery of sylphs and gnomes, the journey description of Belinda's toilet in grand manner, the heroic battle between the sexes make the poem an epic. First of all The term epic machinery mean the agency of the fairy being called Sylphs Gnomes Deities and Demons and angels made to act in a poem. The machinery as pope said signifies the part that the fairy being played in the epics and dramas by intervening in human affairs and assisting the moral portages. Pope uses it to admirable humorous purposes in his mock-heroic. In conformity with classical epics where the gods and other supernatural being are seen intervening in human affairs and taking sides and ending. Assisting and fighting for this protégés. Pope introduces the sylph machinery for enhancing the comic effect. Again, it is Rosicrucian. Rosicrucian Doctrine is the name given to secret brotherhood supposed to have been founded by

Christian Rosankrents. The doctrine of the Rosicrucian was a mixture of religion and magic. In the poem Sylphs, gnomes, nymphs, salamanders are mentioned as being obtained from the Rosicrucian source.

Pope invokes to the muse in the epic convention which sets forth the theme of his mock-epic. The Invocation prepares us for an impending dreadful mischief arising from love affairs and its terrible result. At the same time it admits the triviality of the subject. Invocation to the muse is an epic convention Pope invokes the muse to learn the secret cause of the Lord's assault on the gentle maid. He also wants the muse to enlighten how a little man could dare such a bold task and how a soft female heart could harbor such violent anger.

Pope in a mock heroic vein presents Belinda, the heroine of The Rape of the Lock, as a representation of the flawed manners, degraded morals false pretense and absurdities rampant in the life of the 18th century London. When Belinda sleep is prolonged beyond the meaning hours, she has a mysterious vision of a beautiful youth which sent by Ariel the guardian sylph. Ariel whispers to her ears continuing her against a dreadful event which might be fall her before sunset. Pope with an epic grandeur describes Belinda's toilet to satire the fashion and frivolity of the woman in the 18th century aristocratic society. Her toilet table displays a number of silver uses arranged in a mystic order. Toilet goods included a casket containing ornaments set with bright game a box of perfumes, combs made of ivory and tortoise shell, powders, pins puffs, a mirror some love-letters Bibles. Pope with an epic grandeur describes Belinda's toilet to satirize the fashion and frivolity of the women of the 18th century aristocratic society. The articles of luxury are conceived of as the articles of worship with which Belinda worship, thus the poet treated a trivial subjection a grand style to register the cut and satire vivacity of the scene. When Belinda dons her safety aids with the help of Betty at her toilet it reminds us of Achilles arming himself for battle in Iliad. The arming of Achilles is an indispensable epic convention and the woman putting on make-up in terms of martial idiom effectively evokes the mock-heroic atmosphere.

Major Themes

Gender Roles: - Pope constantly manipulates traditional gender roles in The Rape of the Lock. He portrays Belinda, the poem's protagonist, alternately as an epic hero preparing for battle (I.139-44), a cunning military general reviewing his troops (III.45-6), and a Moor bellowing in rage (V.105-6). The poem thus describes Belinda in specifically male terms: heroism, battle, anger. Other women in the poem similarly demonstrate masculine characteristics. Thalestris displays her prowess on the battlefield while Clarissa provides a weapon to the otherwise impotent Baron. By contrast, the men act with feminine delicacy, fainting during the battle. Pope figures the Baron in mostly feminine terms. He is a fop, willing to prostrate himself before the altar of Love, and he cannot act on his desire without the explicit assistance of a woman. When Belinda conquers him in battle, she stands above him in a position of dominance. Even the poem's more mechanical elements partake in this reversal of gender roles. The mythological sprites literally switch genders after they die, transforming from human women to male spirits. All this gender manipulation calls attention to the perverse behaviors of this fictional society. The poem certainly alludes to the expected behavior of each gender role: women should act with modesty while men should embody heroic and chivalric ideals. However, these characters flout the rules of traditional society.

Female Sexuality: - Pope frequently focuses on female sexuality and the place of women in society throughout the corpus of his poetry, and it was a popular topic in the early eighteenth century (just think of Jonathan Swift's misogynistic poems). The Rape of the Lock does not, however, feature a Swiftian tirade concerning the evils of women. It instead makes a considered exploration of society's expectations for women. The rules of eighteenth-century society dictate that a woman attract a suitable husband while preserving her chastity and virtuous reputation. Pope renders this double-standard dramatically in his depiction of Belinda's hair, which attracts male admirers, and its petticoat counterpart, which acts as a barrier to protect her virginity. Of course, a woman who compromised her virtue—either by deed or reputation—usually lost her place in respectable society. Pope examines the loss of reputation in the poem's sexual allegory, i.e., the "rape" of the lock. By figuring the severing of Belinda' hair as a sexual violation, Pope delves into implications of sexual transgression. After the Baron steals her curl, Belinda exiles herself from the party, retiring to a bedchamber to mourn her loss. Pope thus dramatizes the retreat from society that a sexually-compromised woman would eventually experience. Though Belinda is ultimately celebrated, not ostracized, by her community, her narrative provides Pope with the opportunity to explore society's views on female sexuality.

The Deterioration of Heroic Ideals: - Pope's use of the mock epic genre in The Rape of the Lock affords him the poetic occasion to lament the deterioration of heroic ideals in the modern era. Though he depicts conventional epic themes such as love and war, his comic tone indicates that the grandeur of these matters has suffered since the days of Homer and Virgil. The "amorous causes" in Pope's poem have little in common with Hector's love for Andromache or Paris' theft of Helen in The Iliad or Penelope's devotion to Odysseus in The Odyssey (I. 1). By contrast, the love Pope portrays is that of the Baron for Belinda's icon (her hair), not Belinda herself. Similarly, the "mighty contests" that once populated epic poetry now arise "from trivial things" (I.2). Achilles' rage at Agamemnon for affronting his honor with the theft of Briseis has diminished to the anger of a young beauty at the theft of her hair, which will certainly grow back. Pope thus presents a society that is merely a shadow of its heroic past.

Religious Piety: - The Rape of the Lock demonstrates Pope's anxieties concerning the state of religious piety during the early eighteenth century. Pope was Catholic, and in the poem he indicates his concern that society has embraced objects of worship (beauty, for example) rather than God. His use of religious imagery reveals this perversion. The rituals he depicts in the first and second cantos equate religion with secular love. During Belinda's toilette, the poem imbues the Bibles and billet-doux (love letters) on her dressing table with equal significance. The Baron's altar to Love in the second canto echoes this scene. On the altar—itself an integral part of Christian worship, in particular Catholic Mass—the Baron places "twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt" to honor Love, rather than gilded Bibles (38). Pope symbolizes this equation of religious and erotic love in the cross that Belinda wears. This central symbol of Christianity serves an ornamental, not religious function, adorning Belinda's "white breast" (7). The cross remains sufficiently secular that "Jews might kiss" it and "infidels adore" it (8). Of course, Pope leaves ambiguous the implication that the Jews and infidels are admiring Belinda's breasts and not the cross. This subversion of established principles of Christian worship critiques the laxity of early eighteenth-century attitudes towards religion and morality.

Idleness of the Upper Classes: - The idleness and ignorance of the upper classes is integral to Pope's critique of contemporary society in The Rape of the Lock. His satire focuses largely on the foibles of the aristocracy and gentry, who he depicts as interested only in trivial matters, such as flirting, gossip, and card games. Pope's rendering of ombre as an epic battle demonstrates the frivolity of upper-class entertainment. In reality an excuse for flirting and gambling, the card game represents the young aristocrats' only opportunity to gain heroic recognition. This is not, of course, true heroism, but rather a skill that serves no purpose in the outside world. Chief among the upper classes' other pastimes is gossip, but Pope limits their conversation to the insular world of the aristocratic lifestyle. They care most about "who gave the ball, or paid the visit last," the irrelevant structures of upper-class socializing (III.12). Few discuss the world beyond the society of Hampton Court: "One speaks the glory of the British Queen, / And one describes a charming Indian screen" (III.13-4). This couplet alludes to the worldly pursuits of trade and empire that are occurring outside of these aristocrats' small social world.

Ephemeral Nature of Beauty: - Beauty's ephemeral nature reinforces Pope's critical project in The Rape of the Lock. His poem attempts to dissuade society from placing excessive value on external appearances, especially since such things fade over time. Clarissa's lecture in particular questions the value that society places on appearances. She notes that men worship female beauty without assessing moral character. Pope demonstrates that this is essentially a house without foundation: because "frail beauty must decay," women must have other qualities to sustain them (V.25). Though Clarissa is complicit in the general frivolity and pettiness that Pope censures in the poem, her articulated scruples with regard to appearances serve his social critique.

Man's Place and Purpose in the Universe: - In his prefatory address to the reader of An Essay on Man, Pope describes his intention to consider "man in the abstract, his Nature and his State, since, to prove any moral duty, to enforce any moral precept, or to examine the perfection of imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what condition and relation it is placed in, and what is the proper end and purpose of its being." Pope explores man's nature and his place in the world throughout the poem. The first epistle explains man's relation to the universe. Pope explains that man's place in the "Vast chain of being" is in a middle state, below the angels but above beasts and fowl (I.237). Because man is an integral part of God's creation, he cannot and should not try to comprehend God's design. The second epistle depicts man's relation to the individual. Pope argues that man is governed by the principles of self-love and reason. Self-love and the passions are the origins of human action while reason regulates human behavior. The third epistle examines man's relation to society. The bonds that unite man to others are governed by instinct or reason. Man's relationship with nature is largely instinctual, based on a primordial knowledge of the things necessary to survival (nourishment, sex, etc.). By contrast, man's relationship to other men and to God is based on reason, and consequently, man established the institutions of government and religion. The former proves his love for other men and the second his love for God. The fourth epistle investigates man's relation to happiness, which, Pope argues, is man's ultimate aim. Though Pope does not provide a universal solution to "the proper end and purpose" of man, he does reveal one of the defining characteristics of humanity: man will always seek to understand his purpose in the world.

The Rape of the Lock" as a Social Satire

Satire is humorous criticism intended to point out the flaws in the social and cultural fabric of a given society. Social satire focuses on aspects of society itself, including current events, prevailing attitudes, and political institutions. Social satire has existed for centuries, originating with the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is still a popular venue for social criticism in modern times. The Rape of the Lock exposes in a witty manner the follies and absurdities of the high society of the times. All the recognised weapons of satire have been employed by Pope in a most effective manner. The principal targets of satire in this poem are the aristocratic ladies and gentlemen of Pope's day.

Pope gives us an **amusing picture of the society-ladies** of his time. He tells us that the vanities of society-ladies do not end even with the death of the ladies. Apart from **making fun of their late-rising**, Pope tells us that the aristocratic ladies of those days were **excessively fond of gilded chariots and of Ombre**. He also gives us a **satirical division of ladies of different temperaments into different categories**—fiery termagants, yielding ladies, grave prudes, and light coquettes. He mocks at the extravagant aspirations of the ladies who imagined matrimonial alliances with peers and dukes and dreamt of "garters, stars, and coronets". Pope ridicules the fickleness and superficiality of the ladies 'by referring to their hearts as moving toy-shops and their varying vanities.

The poet **ridicules women's excessive attention to self-embellishment and self-decoration**. In a famous satirical passage, Belinda is described as commencing her toilet operations with a prayer to the "cosmetic powers". "Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet doux" lie in confusion on Belinda's dressing table. Ariel's conjectures regarding the disaster that threatens Belinda are stated in some of the most amusing lines in the poem. Ariel wonders whether Belinda shall break Diana's law, or some frail China-jar receive a flaw; whether she shall stain her honour, or her new brocade; whether she shall forget her prayers, or miss a dance-party; whether she shall lose her heart or her necklace. The paired calamities here are not merely ridiculous contrasts; they show the moral bankruptcy of the ladies of the time.

The **superficiality of the ladies** of the time and a **lack of any depth** of feeling in them are **ridiculed** in the lines in which the domestic pets of the ladies are equated with their husbands. The death of a domestic pet caused as much grief to a lady of fashion as the death of her husband would have caused not even the breaking of a China-vessel in the house had the same effect.

The poet makes ironical references to a lady's love of a coach-and-six, her interest in scandalous books, her desire to be invited to entertainments, and her readily making an appointment with a lover. Some very pungent satire is to be found in the lines which describe the strange shapes in the Cave of Spleen:

> **Here sighs ajar, and there a goose pie talks;**
> **And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.**

The poet is here making a sarcastic reference to the suppressed sexual desires of women and their unexpressed cravings or sexual gratification. Women's tendency quickly to give way to sorrow and grief is ridiculed in the lines which describe the contents of the bag and of the phial which Umbriel brings from the Cave of Spleen. The contents are sighs, sobs, soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.

The moral bankruptcy of the ladies is further ridiculed when Thalestris points out the need for sacrificing everything, even chastity, for the sake of maintaining a good reputation. Virtue might be lost, but not a good name:

Honour forbid ! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.

The same attitude of mind is expressed in the lines in which Belinda declares that she would not have felt so offended if the Baron had stolen any other hair from her but spared that particular lock of her hair:

Oh, hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these !

The **gallants of the time are not spared** by Pope. They are the target of mockery which is as sharp and keen as the satire on the ladies. One of the most amusing passages is the one in which the Baron is described as building an altar of love and setting fire to it with his amorous sighs and with tender love letters. The Baron's worship of love here is comparable to Belinda's worship of the cosmetic powers. No less amusing is the satire on gallants like Sir Plume. Sir Plume's affectations are ridiculed with reference to his amber snuff-box and his spotted cane.

The conversation of the ladies and the knights at the court amuses us by its emptiness and shallowness. The talk generally centred round dance-parties, court-visits, and sex-scandals. The pauses in conversation were filled by snuff-taking, fan-swinging, singing, laughing, ogling, etc. The two principal diversions of the time, the game of Ombre and coffee-drinking, have also their share of ridicule. All these ceremonies expose the normal vacuum in which they are performed. Each ceremony highlights a social absurdity because of the extravagant importance that it receives at the cost of serious concerns of life.

Finally, The Rape of the Lock is a comic assault on a society preoccupied with superficialities. It is a commentary on polite society in general, and on fashionable women in particular. It exposes all values, especially trifling and artificial ones. It ridicules the laziness, idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shams, shallowness, superficiality, prudery, hypocrisy, false ideas of honour, and excessive interest in self-embellishment of the aristocratic ladies of the eighteenth century. It ridicules also the foppery, amorous tendencies, bravado, snuff-taking, and affectations of the aristocratic gentlemen of the time. Humour, wit, irony, sarcasm, innuendo, persiflage, insinuations are all employed as weapons of attack. An occasional touch of obscenity makes the satire spicy.

The Rape of the Lock : Representative Poem of the Age

An incredible masterpiece, however general in its claim, is the most ordinary result of its time. It is established in the contemporary society and social life and reflects that life is in its pith and totality. It is an extraordinary poem by all cannon of arts and it does all that splendidly. Its center chiefly catches the regular peculiarities of the highborn class of his age.

The Rape of the Lock is a mirror to this sort of society of which Master Petre and Belinda are the delegate figures. Belinda is displayed as amazing beguiling like the sun, and lap-canines were an alternate key part of their lives. She is representative women of the time. What is her life, and how can she use her day? There is not the scarcest flash of

earnestness or truthfulness, goodness or glory of human life in any of her words and activities. Belinda is a wonderful woman; she has an assembly of admirers; she is a coquette and a flirt.

At the same time regardless of all their flirtation and the contempt they indicated for their significant others, these women of the court did furtively pine for adoration as Ariel, the watchman sylph, uncovered about Belinda:

‘A natural beau prowling at her heart. They furtively harbored desire to get hitched to rulers and dukes, or men holding some high titles. What’s more longing for their rich prospects ladies like Belinda rest late and are accustomed to climbing late from their cots.’

At the point when Belinda rises, she is locked in promptly with her can which takes up an expansive piece of her time. The excellence of Belinda and the involved subtle elements of her latrine are all situated hence with inimitable beauty, yet behind such a lot of entrancing depiction, there is an invading feeling of vanity and void.

Their hearts are toy-shops

In Canto III, Pope gives a point by point portrayal of the scene where Belinda’s lovely bolt of hair is to be assaulted. There is Hampton Court, the royal residence of the English Queen perfectly arranged on the banks of the stream Thames, where

Britain’s statesmen oft the fall foredoom,
Of outside dictators and of fairies at home.

The writer in an extremely unpretentious way parodies the exercises of the royal residence. The Queen’s interviews with her priests and her bringing tea with the lights of her administration are compared. The genuine and the paltry have been said in one breath, as though taking insight is as normal and pointless a matter as taking tea. The interests of the court are likewise revealed.

Not women just, however the men of honor of the keen set are similarly frivolous. Master Petre and his colleagues are the delegates of the trendy society of the time. They are all unmoving, vacant minded society, and appear to have nothing else to do yet making adoration to or playing with women. The fight between the women and men of honor shows void and vanity of their lives. They visit clubs and espresso houses, and there they enjoy unfilled outrageous talks. “At each expression a notoriety passes on”.

Pope depicts the card-diversion in point of interest, on the grounds that card-recreations appeared to involve a vital place in the everyday exercises of in vogue women and refined men of the period.

Sir plume is an alternate fashionable man of his word, surpassing all others in his vanity and utter void. When he is asked for by his woman love Thalestris to convince Lord Petre to surrender the valuable hairs of Belinda, he articulates words which are unsurpassed in their emptiness.

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Conclusion: Pope completely bears the witticism of its age. In his origination of subject and determination of the tile, Pope shows his incredible wit. This was the sort of life

headed by the in vogue individuals of the privileged societies in the time of Pope, and Pope has depicted it in dazzling colors from one perspective and with scorching parody on the other. While it demonstrates the effortlessness and interest of Belinda's latrine, he shows the vanity and uselessness of everything. There is nothing profound or genuine in the lives and exercises of the stylish individuals, all is vanity and void and this Pope has uncovered with symbolization and splendor. The Rape of the Lock reflects the fake age with all its outward quality and internal vacancy. It the mirror of a specific part of life in the period of Pope. It was, says, Lowell, a mirror in a drawing room, however it gave back a dependable picture of society.

Supernatural Machinery in "The Rape of the Lock"

Alexander Pope explains that "machinery" is a term invented by the critics to signify the part which deities, angels, or demons play in a poem. He goes on to say that the machinery in his poem is based on the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits. According to this doctrine the four elements are inhabited by sylphs, nymphs, gnomes, and salamanders. The sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are supposed to be the best-conditioned creatures imaginable.

Pope tells us in the poem that beautiful women return, after their death, to the elements from which they were derived. Violent tempered women become salamanders or spirits of the fire. Women of gentle and pleasing disposition pass into nymphs or water-spirits. Prudish (Narrow-minded) women become gnomes or earth-spirits. Light-hearted coquettes are changed into sylphs or spirits of the air. Pope attributes to the mischievous influence of the gnomes many unguarded follies of the female sex which he holds up to ridicule.

The first and perhaps the foremost occupation of the **sylphs** is the **protection of fair and chaste ladies** who reject the male sex. It is they who guard and save the chastity of maidens who are on the point of yielding to their lovers. They save these maidens from falling victims to the allurements of "treacherous friends" and dashing young men whose music softens their minds and dancing inflames their passions. The **gnomes fill the minds of proud maidens with foolish ideas** which make them indulge in vain dreams of being married to lords and peers. These **gnomes teach young coquettes to ogle and pretend blushing at the sight of fashionable young men who cause their hearts to flutter**.

It is the **sylphs**, however, who **safely guide the maidens through all dangers.** Whenever a maiden is about to yield to the seduction of a particular young man, another who is more attractive and tempting appears on the scene and the fashionable maiden at once transfers her favour to the new comer. This may be called fickleness in women but it is all contrived by the sylphs.

In most of the famous epics gods and angels play a vital role in the action of the poems thus showing that the human world is not independent or even adequate and that supernatural powers have an important bearing on this world. Pope thought that his mock-epic would be incomplete without a parody of this established practice of epic poets in introducing machinery. The machinery of his poem comprises the sylphs led by Ariel (named after Shakespeare's immortal creation in The Tempest).

Ariel tells us in the poem that to him and his followers has been assigned the humble but **pleasant duty of serving fashionable young ladies**. The functions of these

sylphs are described humorously and include saving the powder from being blown off from the cheeks of ladies, preventing scents from evaporating, preparing cosmetics, teaching the ladies to blush and to put on enchanting airs, suggesting new ideas about dress.

The sylphs are "light" by any heroic standards. They feel scared when a crisis approaches. Yet they are in every detail Belinda's intimates and counsellors. They explain the various complicated conventions and anxieties that make up Belinda's day.

The **sylphs** The Rape of the Lock poem are both a **mirror and mock-apotheosis of customs and conventions of the society of the time.** Belinda is told in a dream that sylphs guide and protect her through the dangers of life. Ariel's account of the predicament of the "tender mind" in a circle of rakes reduces his use of noble words such as "innocent", "honour", and "purity" to the level of a muddle and a sham. He is there, he tells her, to protect her purity according to sylphic theology. Defended by sylphs, the "melting maids" are safe, for what we call "honour" is really no more than Providence. Reassuring Belinda in this way, Ariel is in effect undermining her moral position, taking away with one hand the credit he gives with the other. He explains how a woman's defence is achieved. A maid would fall to Florio if Damon were not at hand to divert her attention, and if, an old folly were not expelled by a new. A maid "shifts the moving toy-shop of her heart" with her varying vanities. It is the sylphs that make her do that.

The **machines are present at every crucial situation** in the play. The sylphs are present in the course of Belinda's journey by boat to Hampton Court. They have been warned by Ariel to remain alert and vigilant, fifty of them having been deputed to take charge of Belinda's petticoat. They are in attendance on Belinda when she plays Ombre. They hover around her when she sips coffee. And they withdraw only when Ariel sees "an earthly lover lurking at her heart". A gnome, called Umbriel, goes to the Cave of Spleen and returns with a bag full of sighs, sobs, screams, and outbursts of anger, and a phial filled with fainting fits, gentle sorrows, soft griefs, etc.—all of which are released over Belinda. And the sylphs are present to witness the flight of Belinda's lock of hair to the sky. In short, the machinery of the poem is constantly kept in the reader's view, to the very last.

The use of machinery serves various other purposes in the poem. It imparts qualities of splendour and wonder to the actors and the actions in the story. Like Homer's gods, Pope's sylphs move easily in and out of the lower world; they surprise without offending our sense of the probable; and they give to ordinary human impulses a sensuous or concrete form. What they really stand for feminine honour, flirtation, courtship, the necessary rivalry of man and woman—are seen in its essence, and a human impulse seen in its essence is always beautiful.

These "light militia of the lower sky" increase dramatic suspense, and therefore story depth, since they foreknow and warn of the central disaster. They reflect the implied belief that humanity and its sensible world do not exhaust the total of a comprehensive statement. They are also spirits of the dead, acting as guardian angels to the living. The sylphan machinery is exquisite, but it must also be recognized as demonic. In tempting Belinda to transcend the flesh-and-blood world by lifelong chastity, Ariel offers her a Satanic substitute for Christianity.

The Rape of the Lock as a Mock Epic Poem

The epic is **long a narrative** poem of supposed **divine inspiration. It** treats a **subject of great and momentous importance for mankind**. The **characters** of the story are **partly human and partly divine**. The **language and style,** in which the incidents are related, are full of **elevation and dignity**. Mock-epic belongs to the class of literature called "burlesque". A burlesque is a parody on a large scale, in which not a single poem, but a whole type of style of literature is parodied, the language and thought proper to a serious theme reproduced in setting forth something ridiculous or trivial. In the Rape of the Lock all the epic traditions are parodied.

"The Rape of the Lock" opens with the proposition of the subject matter and Pope's **invocation to the Muses** to **seek divine inspiration** to compose the literary art. Such a grand treatment of a trivial subject matter like the clipping of the lock of Belinda provokes laughter when the poet says:

> **"I sing – this verse to Caryll, Muse! Is due:**
> **This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:"**

Instead of grand passions and great fights between heroes in which the immortals take part, we have as the **theme** of The Rape of the Lock a **petty amorous quarrel assisted by the spirits of the air**. The epic portrays an age round the personality of a god or a semi-god, and its characters are heroes. The Rape of the Lock, on the other hand, gives us a **picture of a fashionable society**. The central figure in that picture is a pretty society girl, and the other characters are a rash youth, a foolish dandy and a few frivolous women. Instead of deep and genuine passions as found in ancient epics, we come across a succession of mock passions in The Rape of the Lock.

The **action** of The Rape of the Lock turns on a **trivial incident**—the cutting off a lock of hair from a lady's head. Such a thing had taken place in reality. One lord Petre cut off a lock of hair from the head of Lady Arabella Fermor. There was a quarrel between the two families, and Pope was requested to make a jest of the incident, and 'laugh them together'. This was the occasion of the composition of the poem. Pope did give to the world a fine work of wit—the best mock-heroic poem in the English language, but we do not know whether the families were reconciled.

The theme of the poem is suggested in the invocation, as in an epic poem, but the **theme is ridiculously trivial**, in comparison with the grand theme of an epic. The action opens with a mock-heroic manner with the awakening of Belinda, the heroine of the poem. Belinda is the very goddess of beauty, and the luster of her eyes surpasses that of the sun, who peeped timorously through the white curtains in Belinda's room:

> **"Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,**
> **And opened those eyes that must eclipse the day."**

The whole **structure** of The Rape of the Lock is cast in the epic mood, but it could not be a serious epic because the incident is **trivial**—so we have the mock-heroic or heroi-comical poem. The poem is divided into Cantos like an epic poem, and there are ironic parallels to the main Incidents of the epic. The poem begins with an invocation in epic tradition:

> **"Say, what strange motive, Goddness! could compel**
> **A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?"**

As in epics, in The Rape of the Lock, too, divine beings are portrayed. Belinda is in the divine care of the sylphs:

> **"Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished 'care,**

Of thousand bright inhabitants of air".

But then the sylphs are fragile, airy beings and they are helpless before the caprices of men. Despite all their concern for Belinda, her beautiful lock of hair is raped by the naughty Baron. There is the mischievous gnome who, like Milton's Satan, is intent upon making Belinda miserable and thereby all her admirers. The gnome addresses the wayward Queen who rules the sex from fifteen to fifty, thus:

"Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen."

The epic always uses the **supernatural** element. In The Iliad there are gods and goddesses; in The Rape of the Lock, there are the **sylphs and gnomes**. These aerial spirits are small and insignificant things, and are, therefore, exactly in keeping with the triviality of the theme. They guard the person of the heroine and when there is a fight between the followers of Belinda and those of the Baron; they take part in the fight, like the gods and goddesses in the Trojan War:

"Propped on their bodkin spears, the spirits survey,
The growing combat or assist the fray."

An epic poem must contain some **episodes** also. In keeping with this practice Pope has introduced the **episode of the game of Ombre** which is described in great detail. There is also the hazardous journey of Umbriel to the Cave of Spleen. Then there is the battle between the lords and ladies just like the battles in epic poetry. But in the true mock-heroic style this battle is fought with fans and snuff instead of with swords and spears.

There are single **combats** also between Belinda and the Baron and between Clarissa and Sir Plume. Belinda's toilet is another engaging account in which Pope has attributed in a perfect mock-heroic manner, the solemnity of a religious observance to the luxurious toilet of a lady of fashion and frivolity. Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux, are all brought to the same table and the slight and the series are all strangely synthesized.

The Rape of the Lock is a rare instance in which the slight theme is given an exalted treatment for satirical purposes. All through the poem, a pose of importance is given to all that is thoroughly unimportant and insignificant and practically meaningless and farcical. The very conception of writing an epic on the rape of a lock of hair is funny and bears testimony to the poet's effort to make the little great and the great little.

In The Rape of the Lock the balance between the concealed irony and the assumed gravity is nicely trimmed: the little is made great and the great made little. It is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly, the perfection of mock heroic.

Rape of the Lock - Significance of Cave of Spleen

Spleen was the Augustan name what Elizabethan described as melancholy. It is less of a disease than a fashionable affectation. Fashionable ladies, poets, and playwrights pretend to suffer from it so as to give an impression that the victims are serious thinkers of creative writers. Pope exalts Spleen to the level of Goddess and cave of Spleen to the level of underworld and personifies her as the Queen of underworld. This suits his scheme to mock the epic conventions systematically because the serious epics like "Illiad" and "Aenied" show heroes taking a voyage to the underworld. In mockery of this convention, however, Pope packs a lot of social criticism, especially the criticism of fashionable vanities and affectations of the fashionable women.

Sylphs were in attendance to Belinda when she plays Ombre. They hover around her when she sips coffee. They withdraw when Ariel sees "an earthly lover lurking at her heart". A gnome, called 'Umbriel' holds the place of Ariel. After the rape of the lock of Belinda, Umbriel wanted to inflict her with Spleen. So he took a journey to the underworld to the cave of spleen.

It is reported that the Queen of Spleen as a fickle and eccentric goddess holds full control over the fashionable ladies ranging from fifteen to fifty. She, the Goddess of Spleen is the aspiration behind the affectation of melancholy as well as the pretension to the poetry by the female sex.

The effect of Spleen on the women varies according to their temperament. While some consults the physician for their treatments. Some begin to write scandalous plays and those who are proud give them an air and try to delay their visit as to show their importance.

While speaking of the cave of Spleen, Pope gives a vivid picture of the fantastic vision to which the men and women plagued with spleen are exposed to. At the moment we see flaming devils and snakes erected on their coils, lustrous ghosts, opening sepulchers and red fires and the other moment we visualizes the lakes of liquid gold, scenes of paradise, transparent places and angles coming to solve the difficulties in human life. Thus the description of the cave of Spleen is highly symbolic and conveys the accurate picture of the people suffering from Spleen.

Moreover, Pope points out the illusion from which morbidly melancholic people suffer. Such people are often plagued with fantastic ideas or visions and often imagine themselves transformed into various objects.

Then, there are two hand maidens who wait upon the Goddess of Spleen, are Ill-Nature and Affectation. Apparently, it is seemed that Pope has delineated the pictures of two hand-maidens just to emphasize the splendour of Goddess of Spleen. But since Spleen, Ill-Nature and Affectation are the typical feminine vices in Pope's time, therefore, the delineation of their portraits provide the vivid picture of the fashionable women who affected so many things.

Ill-Nature is presented as an ugly, wrinkled and decayed woman who pretends to be virtuous and pious but essentially a vicious creature who takes delight in murdering reputations of the other people. The black and white lines of her dress presents the contrast between her pretension and reality – the white colour suggests purity, innocence and religiosity and the black colour suggest malice, envy and scorn. In fact, Pope has satirized the double role of the woman's nature of his times that pretends to be pious and virtuous just to maintain their good reputation i.e. the woman of his age gives importance to their reputation than their virtues. In other words they are hypocrite.

The, Pope delineates the portrait of the Affectation, the second hand maiden of the Goddess of Spleen. Affectation is personified as an old woman who is beautiful, young and tender though she is fairly old. Delineation of the portrait of the Affectation provides a vivid picture of the fashionable woman. It includes a sharp, ironical commentary on the vanity, frivolity and hypocrisy of fashionable women.

There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practiced to lisp, and hang the head aside,

Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

Then, the bag, which the Goddess of Spleen gives to gnome, Umbriel, is the clever mimicry of the bag in which Ulysses entrapped the winds. The bag contains all the violent and noisy emotions while the Phial contains the noisiest sort of sufferings. This bag is indicative of female weaknesses. Thus, Pope seems to imply that the women are capable of all sorts of antics to demonstrate their sufferings.

To sum up, the visit to the cave of Spleen is introduced for the sake of mock-heroic effect, which gives an opportunity to the poet to satirize the evil nature and the affectations of ladies and gentlemen of his society. Furthermore, it also serves the action of the poem.

Technique & Plot-Construction in "The Rape of the Lock"

The Rape of the Lock has greatly been admired for its development of the theme and its pattern of construction. The successive scenes, says a critic, are given with so firm and a clear touch—there is such a sense of form—that it is impossible not to recognise a consummate artistic power. The poem has the merit that belongs to any work of art which expresses in the most finished form the sentiments and characteristics of a particular class of society. It contains the truest and liveliest picture of eighteenth century high society. Its subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other mock-epic poem.

The poem opens judiciously with the guardian-sylph warning Belinda against some unknown, imminent danger. The account which Ariel gives of the nature and activities of these inhabitants of the air, namely, the sylphs, is exquisitely fancied. Several strokes of satire have been inserted into this account with great delicacy. The transformation of women of different tempers into different kinds of spirits has a great appeal. The description of the toilet, which follows, is given in magnificent terms. Belinda's dressing is painted in as pompous a manner as Achilles arming. Canto 1 ends with a circumstance artfully contrived to keep this beautiful machinery in the reader's eye: "The busy sylphs surround their darling care", etc.

The mention of the lock of hair, on which the poem turns, is rightly reserved for the second Canto. The sacrifice of the Baron, to implore success for his undertaking, is another example of Pope's judgment in heightening the subject. The succeeding scene of sailing upon the Thames is most gay and delightful. The machinery is again introduced here, and with much propriety. Ariel summons his denizens of the air who are painted with a rich exuberance of fancy. A different sylph has charge of each part of Belinda's dress. But as many as fifty sylphs are deputed to guard Belinda's petticoat which, though a "seven-fold fence," has often been known "to fail". The celebrated raillery of Addison on the hoop-petticoat has nothing equal to Pope's description of the difficulty of guarding a part of dress of such high consequence: "Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail."

Pope shows great delicacy in his satire when he employs, with the ; utmost judgment and elegance, all the implements and instruments of the toilet as means of punishment to those spirits who shall be careless of their duties—of punishment such as sylphs alone could undergo. If Virgil has earned such high commendation for exalting his bees, by the majesty and magnificence of his diction, Pope deserves equal praise for the pomp and luster of his language on so trivial a subject.

The same mastery of language appears in the lively and elegant description of the game of Ombre in the third Canto. Here, again, Pope artfully introduces his machinery:

Soon as she spreads her hand, the aerial guard Descend, and sit on each important card. The majesty, with which the kings of spades and clubs, and the knaves of diamonds and clubs are spoken of, is very amusing to the imagination; and the whole game is conducted with great art and judgment. It is finely contrived that Belinda should be victorious, as the victory represents a change of fortune in the dreadful loss she was speedily to undergo, and gives occasion to the poet to introduce a moral reflection from Virgil, which adds to the pleasantry of the story:

> **O thoughtless mortals: ever blind to fate,**
> **Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.**

To this scene succeeds a coffee-table. It is doubtless as hard to make a coffee-pot shine in poetry as a plough; yet Pope has succeeded in giving elegance to so familiar an object. The guardian spirits are again active, and importantly employed. But nothing can excel their behaviour, and their wakeful solicitude for Belinda, when the danger grows more imminent, and the catastrophe approaches: "Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair". The methods by which they try to preserve her from the intended mischief are such as could only be executed by sylphs. Still further to heighten the piece and to preserve the characters of the machines to the last, one of the sylphs intervening to protect the lock is cut into two by Fate with its shears. The line: "But airy substance soon unites again" is an admirable parody on that passage of Milton, which describes Satan wounded.

The parodies are some of the most exquisite parts of this poem. The introduction of parodies on serious and solemn passages of Homer and Virgil give much life and spirit to mock-epic poetry. The parodies of the speech of Sarpedon in Homer, and of the description of Achille's sceptre, together with the scales of Jupiter from Homer and Virgil are judiciously introduced in their several places. The mind of the reader is engaged by novelty, when it so unexpectedly finds a thought or object it had been accustomed to survey in another form, suddenly arrayed in a ridiculous garb. A mixture of ridiculous and comic images, with serious and important ones, add also no small beauty to this kind of poetry, as in the passage where real and imaginary misfortunes are coupled together with reference to captured kings, frustrated lovers, aged ladies, fierce dictators, and the moon-goddess.

In the same Canto (IV), the Cave of Spleen, the pictures of the attendants, Ill-nature and Affectation, the effects of the vapour that hangs over the palace of Spleen, the imaginary diseases she occasions, the speech of Umbriel to this malignant deity, the phial of female sorrows, the breaking of the phial with its direful effects, and the speech of the disconsolate Belinda—all these circumstances are poetically imagined, and are far superior to any of Boileaii and Garth. How natural it is for Belinda in her dismal and solitary situation to wish to be taken to some place where gilt chariots are never seen, where nobody plays Ombre, and where nobody tastes bohea (black tea). Nothing is

more common for poets than to introduce omens as preceding some important and dreadful event. Pope enumerates, with exquisite satire, the alarming prodigies which occur before the rape of Belinda's lock. The direfulness of the impending evil is aggravated by the muteness of Poll, and the unkindness of Shock.

The chief subject of the final Canto is the battle that ensues, and the efforts of the ladies to recover the hair. The battle is described, as it ought to be, in very lofty and pompous terms. The weapons used are the most proper imaginable in a mock epic—the lightning of the ladies' eyes, intolerable frowns, a pinch of snuff, and a bodkin. The machinery is not forgotten. Triumphant Umbriel claps his glad wings on viewing the fight. When the snuff is flung at the Baron, the gnomes carry it directly to the Baron's nose.

Then comes the grand catastrophe of the poem. The invaluable lock, which is so eagerly sought, is lost beyond recovery. And here the poet makes a judicious use of that famous fiction of Ariosto, that all things lost on earth are treasured on the moon. The denouement of this is well-conducted. What has become of this important lock of hair ? It is made a constellation with that of Berenice. As it rises to heaven, the sylphs behold it in its flight and feel pleased with its progress through the skies. The machinery of the poem is constantly kept in the readers view, to the very last. Even when the lock is transformed into a constellation, the sylphs, who had so carefully guarded it, are here once again artfully mentioned, as finally rejoicing in its honourable transformation.

John Dennis was, however, not much impressed by the construction of this poem. According to him, the machinery of the poem renders the action extravagant, absurd and incredible instead of making it wonderful and delightful. The machines, he says, do not in the least influence that action; they neither prevent the danger of Belinda, nor promote it, nor retard it, unless perhaps for one moment, which is ridiculous. There is no opposition of the machines to one another in the poem. Umbriel, the gnome, is not introduced till the action is over, and till Ariel and the spirits under him have quitted Belinda.

Dennis is of the view that there is no such thing as the fable or characters in the poem. The sentiments, according to him, are both trivial and extravagant. Dennis considers Umbriel's journey to the Cave of Spleen to be irrelevant: "How absurd was it then for this to take a journey down to the central earth, for no other purpose than to give Belinda the spleen, whom he left and found in the height of it."

The Character of Belinda in "The Rape of the Lock"

There are several aspects of the personality of Belinda as portrayed by Pope in The Rape of the Lock. She is a coquette, an injured innocent, a sweet charmer, a society belle, a rival of the sun, and a murderer of millions. She has, indeed, a Cleopatra-like variety.

The primary quality of Belinda is **spiritual shallowness** and an **incapacity for moral awareness**. Ariel acquaints us with her flirtatious character when he says that it is not known whether the beautiful Belinda will allow her chastity to be violated, or some delicate China-jar will break; whether she will stain her honour or her new brocade; whether she will lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball. The first possibility in each of these pairs of calamities shows that Belinda is not likely to exercise sufficient caution in protecting her maidenly purity. These lines show how easily a lady like Belinda might lose her chastity in a world of womanisers and how irreparably.

She has transformed all spi**ritual exercises and emblems into a coquette's self-display and self-adoration**. For instance, she wears a sparkling cross which is a religious symbol but which is put by her to the uses of ornamentation. For all her professed purity, Belinda is found to be secretly in love with Baron. There consists her "fall". When the sylphs warn her of the approaching scissors and the danger to her hair, she seems to be indifferent to the warning. A thousand spirits of the air rush to her to guard her lock. A thousand wings, by turns, blow back her hair. Thrice the sylphs jerk the diamond in her ear; thrice she looks back; and thrice the foe draws near. Her behaviour leads Ariel to make the surprising discovery that, in spite of all her pretence, she is amorously inclined toward a gallant:

Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.

When Baron has clipped her lock, Belinda's reaction is described in a beautiful mocking vein.

Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies.

We see Belinda as a true Fury. While lamenting the loss of her lock, she deplores the fact that she was attracted by the pleasures of court-life. She says that it would have been better if she had stayed and said her prayers at home instead of roaming with youthful lords. She recalls the omens which she witnessed in the morning but which she ignored. She would not have felt so hurt if, instead of the curl which lent such glory to her head, some other hair had been stolen by the Baron.

Belinda behaves like a **spoilt child**. At the outset we learn that she is a lazy woman who continues to sleep till the hour of twelve in the day and who, on waking up, at that hour, falls asleep again, to be awakened ultimately by the licking, tongue of her pet dog. When she finally rises from bed, she goes through a love-letter which is waiting for her and makes her forget the vision that she has seen. Soon she gets busy with her toilet. She regards her toilet as a religious ceremony to be scrupulously gone through. She begins her toilet with a prayer to the "cosmetic powers". Apart from her laziness and her excessive preoccupation with her toilet (including the pains that she takes to curl her hair), she has a **thirst for fame** which leads her to engage herself in an encounter with two adventurous knights at the game of Ombre. Having won a victory at Ombre, she feels jubilant and her exultant shouting fills the sky. She undoubtedly possesses a superb skill in playing the game of Ombre, but the manner in which she rejoices over her victory shows not only her vanity and superficiality but a childish temperament. The poet appropriately points out the **shallowness of human beings in becoming too quickly depressed and too quickly joyous**. Belinda does not realise that this day of victory would soon be converted into a day of disgrace for her, though the disgrace would be as trivial as the victory.

Belinda's outbursts, when a lock of her hair has been clipped, also show her as a spoiled child. A trivial incident fills her with an uncontrollable rage. She utters "louder shrieks" than those uttered by women who have lost their husbands or their lap dogs. She experiences greater resentment and anger over the "rape" of her hair than youthful kings who are captured alive in battle, scornful old maids who have lost their charms, passionate lovers, who have been deprived of the pleasures of love, and even aged ladies whose desire to be kissed has been frustrated. Later, when Umbriel pours over Belinda the contents of the bag which he has brought from the Cave of Spleen, Belinda

begins to burn with an inhuman wrath. When Umbriel breaks the bottle, Belinda feels grief-stricken. The sorrowful head sinks on her breast, and she begins to heave sighs. She now recalls with deep distress on the kind of life she has lived.

Pope's attitude to Belinda is very mixed and complicated: mocking and yet tender, admiring and yet critical. The paradoxical nature of Pope's attitude is intimately related to the paradox of Belinda's situation. If Belinda is to find her role of woman, she must lose the role of a virgin, and the more graceful her acceptance of loss the greater the victory she achieves through it. Because Pope is dealing with this paradox, his attitude must be mixed and complicated.

There is no doubt that Belinda undergoes a "fall", at least in the eyes of Ariel. Yet this fall is only a fall from the self-love. It is merely a fall into a more natural human condition and best regarded, perhaps, as a kind of fortunate fall: Belinda simply falls in love, and thus a situation is created whereby she can escape from the meaningless virginity and honour represented by the sylphs.

"The Rape of the Lock" : Relationship between Literature and Society

The Rape of the Lock is a poem in which Alexander Pope shows himself emphatically as the spokesman of his age. This poem pictures the artificial tone of the age and the frivolous aspect of femininity. "It is the epic of trifling's; a page torn from the petty, pleasure-seeking life of fashionable beauty. In short, the veritable apotheosis in literary guise of scent patches and powder." We see in this poem the elegance and the emptiness, the meanness and the vanity, the jealousies, treacheries and intrigues of the social life of the aristocracy of the eighteenth century.

At the very outset we become acquainted with the idleness, late-rising, and fondness for domestic pets of the aristocratic ladies of the time. Belinda wakes up at the hour of twelve and then falls asleep again. We also become acquainted in the very beginning of the poem with the superficiality of the ladies who loved gilded chariots, and affected a love of the game of Ombre. Their ambition to marry peers and dukes, or men holding other high titles, is indicated, too, in the opening Canto:

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their sweeping train....

The poem brings out the coquetry, the art, the artifice, and the "varying vanities" of the ladies of the time. These ladies learnt early in their life how to roll their eyes and to blush in an intriguing manner. Their hearts were like toy-shops which moved from one gallant to another:

With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toy-shop of their heart.

One gallant could drive put another gallant, and one coach could drive out another coach. "**Levity" was the hallmark of these women**. Their manners and behaviour were artificial and affected. They knew the art to lisp, to hang their heads aside, to faint into airs, and to languish with pride. They used to sink on their rich quilts and pretend sickness so that young gallant men should come to inquire after their health and in this way also see the costly gowns which they were wearing.

The women of the time **felt glad to receive love-letters**. When Belinda gets up from her bed her eyes first open on a love-letter. Another of the vanities of these ladies was to keep domestic pets such as dogs and parrots. Belinda has her Shock and her Poll. Among the ill-omens that Belinda recalls after losing a lock of her hair is the indifference of her two domestic pets: **"Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!"**

Aristocratic ladies treated **toilet as their chief concern**. One important passage in The Rape of the Lock describes Belinda at her dressing-table. Before commencing her toilet operation, she offers a prayer to the "cosmetic powers". At her dressing-table are "the various offerings of the world"— India's glowing gems, Arabia's perfumes, speckled and white combs, files of pins, "puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux." Later in the poem, we are told how these ladies "take such constant care to prepare the bodkin, comb and essence!" They take special pains to curl their hair; they bind their locks in paper durance; and they strain their tender heads with fillets.

The ladies **lose their tempers over trifles**. Screams of horror from Belinda rend the affrighted skies, and a "living lightning" flashes from her eyes. Thalestris is described as the "fierce virago". The ladies in the poem are depicted as very aggressive, and it is they who start the battle. Women have been jealous of one another from time immemorial. Clarissa stealthily hands over a pair of scissors to Baron in order to assist him in his wicked design. It is in all probability Clarissa's jealousy of Belinda's beauty, and fame that prompts her to offer this assistance to Baron.

The ladies have **no moral scruples**. "Honour" is a word with little meaning for them; and "reputation" is more important to them than honour. The loss of "honour" does not matter if "reputation" is not lost. Several passages in the poem reveal the moral disarray of their lives. A lady's missing a dance-party is as serious a matter as her forgetting her prayers. A lady's losing her necklace is as serious as losing her heart. The death of a lap-dog or the breaking of a rich China-vessel is as serious a matter to the lady as the death of her husband. There is a complete confusion of moral values in their minds. Belinda herself has no real sense of feminine virtue or honour. She is in love with Baron, and for this reason Ariel gives her up when he sees "an earthly lover lurking at her heart". Her lament over the loss of a lock of her hair is sheer hypocrisy. Besides, she feels unhappy because the loss of this particular lock of hair was vital to her charm. She would not have been much hurt if Baron had stolen any other hair:

> **Oh, hadst thou, cruel, been content to seize**
> **Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these !**

The **aristocratic young men** of the time were, like the ladies, **lacking in any serious purpose or** morality. Florio and Damon are representatives of those gallants and fops who vie with one another to capture the hearts of the ladies. There is a keen competition among them to win feminine favours. Wigs strive with wigs, and sword-knots strive with sword-knots. The attitude of these fops to love is amusingly described in the manner in which Baron tries to pacify heaven in order to win Belinda's heart. Baron builds an altar to Love. This altar consists of twelve vast French romances, three garters, and half a pair of gloves and all the trophies of his former loves. He lights a fire with the tender love-letters that he has received, and breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.

The **life of the fops** is as **empty and shallow** as the life of the ladies. This is emphasized by the role played by the empty-headed Sir Plume with bit "unthinking face". He is proud of his "amber snuff-box" and "the nice conduct of a clouded cane". He can hardly speak a dozen words without uttering half a dozen oaths. The manner in

which a "beau" or a "witling" perishes in the battle of the sexes shows the same thing . "One died in metaphor, and one in song." Taking snuff and wearing wigs were the foremost fashions among the men of that time.

Lastly, we are given a **satirical picture of judges, jury men, and merchants**. The judges are in a hurry to sign the judgment and the jury-men are in a hurry to pronounce a verdict of-"guilty" because they want to get back home for dinner. The merchants spend feverish hours at the Exchange. Other aspects of the life of the time which are mentioned in an amusing manner are the wits of heroes and of beaux, courtiers' promises, cages for gnats, chains to yoke a flea, dried butterflies, and heavy books of casuistry (excuse).

The Rape of the Lock : Treatment of Women

The Rape of the Lock has rightly been described as a representation of the petty pleasure-seeking life of a fashionable beauty. The poem is a satire on beautiful aristocratic women of the eighteenth century whose lives centred round petty interests and the quest of shallow pleasures. The principal target of attack is Belinda, a fashionable beautiful lady of the upper classes of the eighteenth-century English society. There can be no doubt about the beauty of this lady. Early in the poem, she is compared to the sun.

She wears a sparkling cross which even Jews and infidels would like to kiss. If she has any faults," they would be hidden by her graceful ease and her sweetness of temper. Her care-free disposition is expressed thus**: "Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay**." She nourishes two locks of hair which greatly enhance the already irresistible charm of this lady. Indeed, the poet invests her almost with the character of a divinity. At one point the praise of her attractions may be a mere mask for Pope's satiric attack on her personality as a coquette; at another it is praise which no irony can fully undermine. Nor can there be any doubt that she belongs to the fashionable world.

But, although Belinda is a woman of superb beauty and charm, the poet fully reveals to us her petty, pleasure-seeking nature. She suffers from all the **vanities, follies, and lack of moral scruple of the aristocratic ladies of the time**. She is a lazy woman who continues to sleep till the hour of twelve in the day and who, on waking up at that hour, falls asleep again, to be wakened subsequently by the licking tongue of her pet dog, Shock. When she does ultimately get up from bed, she goes through a love-letter which is waiting for her and which makes her forget the dream that she has seen. Next, she gets ready for her toilet. Thus we see that her day begins at noon, and that too when she is awakened by her lap-dog's licking her face. Keeping pets, encouraging and receiving love-letters, and self-embellishment were some of the principal interests of Belinda and the whole class of the society to which she belonged.

Wearing a white robe, the beautiful Belinda now addresses a prayer to the “cosmetic powers". Then she looks at her heavenly reflection in the mirror, and naturally feels pleased by her beauty. By her side stands Betty to assist her in the sacred ceremony of toilet. Numerous caskets are opened and they reveal their precious contents brought from different countries of the world. This description fully exposes Belinda's vanity and her love of fashion. But, of course, these were the characteristics of all aristocratic ladies of the eighteenth century. Nor have aristocratic women shed these characteristics in our times.

Belinda's emergence from her house is compared to the rising of the sun. The eyes of everyone are fixed on her because of her superior charm. She gives her smiles to everybody but shows no special favour to anyone. Men who look at her are captured by her locks of hair with their bright ringlets which embellish her ivory-white neck. The adventurous Baron, Lord Petre, is prepared to use force or fraud to rob her of these locks. The whole of this description shows **Belinda as the leading light of the fashionable world and as a woman whose chief desire is to win admiration**. The manner in which Ariel describes the nature of the calamity which might befall Belinda also shows her superficial nature and her lack of moral scruple. It is not known, says Ariel, whether she will allow her chastity to be violated, or some delicate China-jar will crack; whether she will stain her honour, or her new brocade; whether she will forget her prayers, or miss a masked ball; whether she will lose her heart or her necklace; or whether Heaven has decreed that Shock must fall.

The coach carrying Belinda and her party takes them to Hampton Court. The gallant young men and the beautiful young ladies come here to enjoy the pleasures of the royal court. Their conversation covers a wide range of trivialities, much of it attacking the moral character of various persons: "At every word a reputation dies." We next become acquainted with Belinda's **thirst for fame** which leads her to engage herself in an encounter with two adventurous Knights at the game of Ombre. Her breast expands with the pleasure of an anticipated victory in this contest. Having won, she feels jubilant and her exultant shouting fills the sky. She undoubtedly shows a splendid skill in playing the game of Ombre, but the manner in which she gloats over her victory shows not only her vanity but superficiality of mind. After the game of Ombre, Belinda participates in the ceremony of coffee-drinking. Toilet, gossip, Ombre, and coffee drinking— these occupy much of Belinda's time in the day. She does **not seem to have any intellectual interests** whatever.

For all her **professed purity**, Belinda is found to be **secretly in love** with Baron. When Ariel finds "an earthly lover lurking at her heart", he feels amazed and retires from the scene with a sigh. Ariel realises that he can no longer protect her, because spirits like him can protect only maidens who have pure minds and who have no room in their hearts for earthly lovers. Baron then cuts off a lock of Belinda's hair. Another side of Belinda's personality is exposed. She grows furious. While lamenting the loss of her lock, she deplores the fact that she was so attracted by the pleasures of the court-life. She recalls the omens which she witnessed in the morning and which she ignored. Thrice from her trembling hand the patch-box fell; the China-vessels shook without wind; Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind. Not only is the cause of Belinda's **lament trivial**, but the very **lament is hypocritical.** She would not have felt so hurt if, instead of the curl which lent such glory to her head, some other hair had been stolen by the Baron.

The **primary quality** of Belinda is **spiritual shallowness and an incapacity for moral awareness**. She has transformed all spiritual exercises and emblems into a coquette's self-display and self-adoration. Even the Cross, which is a religious symbol, is used as an ornament. And she does all this with a frivolous heedlessness. The part or rather parts, which Belinda plays in the poem, are at once contemptible, ridiculous, endearing, precarious, poignant, and petty. It is difficult even to believe that, in spite of all her attractions, she is a true lady. If she were, she would not act as she does over the clipping of her lock or exercise her spleen to such a vigorous degree. She **lacks the knowledge of the common fate of coquettes** like herself. Even so, her reaction to the rape is, from the point of view of her society, perfectly natural. Baron's act is a rude

breach of the rules of courtship. She is faced now with the necessity of making a much more serious and deliberate decision. Her immediate response had been marked by prudery, hypocrisy, and affectation.

In spite of the accessory elements pointed out above, the fact remains that the poem is chiefly and largely the picture of the life of a petty-minded, pleasure seeking fashionable beauty.

"The Rape of the Lock" as a source of perpetual delight

There is no finer gem than The Rape of the Lock in all the lighter treasures of English fancy. Compared with any other mock-heroic poem in the English language, it shines in pure supremacy for elegance, completeness, point, and playfulness. It diverts us by its mimicry of greatness, and astonishes by the beauty of its parts, and the fairy brightness of its ornaments. It is a jewel of many facets, each shining brilliantly. The poem takes us into an enchanted, brilliant world in which, keeping the Cave of Spleen well aside, almost nothing is dull.

The most striking quality of this poem is its sparkling wit. The poem is in effect a satire upon the fashionable world of the eighteenth century, and more especially upon feminine frivolity. The vanities of the women of the time are exquisitely ridiculed. Their pre-occupation with self-embellishment is satirised in the famous passage which describes Belinda's toilet. Their moral bankruptcy is exposed in the amusing lines in which we are told that, for a lady, staining her new brocade was as disastrous as staining her honour, and losing a necklace was as calamitous as losing her heart. The breaking of a China-vessel or the death of a lap-dog was as great a misfortune for a woman as the death of a husband. Some very amusing satire is to be found in the lines which describe the strange shapes in the Cave of Spleen: "And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks." Virtue was not a prime consideration.

Almost every aspect of the fashionable society of the time is mocked at by Pope, and the mockery sends us into laughter. Much of the pleasure of this poem results from this mockery. Fun is the key-note of the poem.

Pope also gives us many pictures of the elegance and glitter of that society. These pictures are also a source of delight to the reader. Belinda is a woman of superb beauty and charm. She is certainly an object of mockery in the poem, but she also earns our homage and adoration. She is regarded as the rival of the beams of the sun. She wears a sparkling cross which even Jews and infidels would, kiss. She has a Cleopatra-like variety of appearance and character. Her beauty and charm are emphasised when she gets busy with her toilet. Robed in white, she sees her heavenly reflection in the mirror. Her beauty is greatly enhanced by the various decorative aids which she employs. We are fascinated by her beauty as described in this famous passage dealing with her toilet. Although the hint of satire here also is unmistakable, these lines possess great poetic charm which is a source of much pleasure to us:

> **Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;**
> **The fair each moment rises in her charms,**
> **Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,**
> **And calls forth all the wonders of her face;**
> **Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,**
> **And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.**

Belinda's cheerful temperament adds to her attractions. She is not only cheerful herself but "maintains thousands more in equal mirth." At the end of the poem, her beautiful lock is turned into a constellation in the sky, adding "new glory to the shining sphere." We see Belinda in many different lights— as coquette, injured innocent, sweet charmer, society belle, rival of the sun, and murderer of millions. The parts Belinda plays in the elaborate social drama of manners are certainly ridiculous and even contemptible, but they are also endearing. She outshines all her sex in divine attributes and importance. The dazzling personality of Belinda greatly contributes to the appeal of the poem.

Pope ridicules not only the ladies but also the fashionable young men of the time. The Baron's worship of Love is an example of the ridicule. No less amusing is the satire on gallants like Sir Plume, with his amber snuff-box, his spotted cane, and his "unthinking face".

The machinery of the poem is another source of the pleasure which this poem affords. Basically the machinery of the sylphs and gnomes is intended to heighten the mock-epic effect of the poem. But the sylphs have a beauty and charm of their own. The occupations and tasks of the sylphs are described in exquisitely witty lines, often of great poetic beauty. The sylphs illustrate the sensuous richness with which Belinda is surrounded. The myth of the sylphs enables the poet to show his awareness of the absurdities of a point of view which, nevertheless, is charming, delightful, and filled with a real poetry. The sylphs are exquisitely related to traditional beliefs, both trivial and profound. Probably the largest single way in which Pope imparted qualities of splendour and wonder to his actors and actions was through his brilliant adaptation of epic machinery. They really stand for feminine honour, flirtation, courtship, the necessary rivalry of man and woman and it is seen in its essence.

Lastly, It would, however, be wrong to regard this poem as a work of beauty and grace devoid of any substance. Its airy and fanciful character certainly predominates, but it also has a serious moral purpose which cannot be ignored. Dr. Johnson complimented Pope on having put a moral in this poem which may be regarded as a condemnation of the ill-humour, spleen, vanity, and intolerance of women, and a plea for good-humour and a sane, rational approach to things. Clarissa's speech is most vital in this connection. The glories of social position and privilege are, in Clarissa's view, achieved in vain "unless good sense preserves what beauty gains." The best course for women is to make good use of their power and "keep good humour still whatever we lose." The poem is also a condemnation of the mentality of fops and dandies. Certain moral reflections are found scattered in the poem. For instance:

> **O thoughtless mortals ! ever blind to fate,**
> **Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.**

JOHN DONNE, 1572-1631

A contemporary of Marlowe and Shakespeare, Donne (pronounced as "Dun") shares with them the spirit and the quality of the Renaissance. The contradictions of the age are reflected in the career and achievement of Donne. The inconsistency of the Elizabethans is mirrored in the complex personality of Donne, a poet of intellectual ingenuity and theological ingenuousness. It is not difficult to explain the versatility and the varied achievements of the poet, in the light of the age to which he belonged.

Birth, parentage, early life and marriage: - John Donne, born in 1572, was the eldest son of a London iron-merchant. His mother was the sister of John Heywood, the dramatist. After receiving education privately, Donne matriculated at Oxford in 1584. Probably he went to Cambridge for higher education, but obviously he could not take a degree on account of his opposition to the oath of thirty-nine articles. Of the years from 1584 to 1592, we know very little. He was admitted as a law student to Lincoln's Inn in May 1592. Like many young members of the Inns of Court, he was fond of pleasure and company: "Not dissolute but very neat, a great visitor of ladies, a great frequentor of plays, a great writer of conceited verses."

John Donne tells us that during that period, he "of study and play made strange hermaphrodites". During these formative years, Donne studied both law and religion. He also wrote a number of songs, elegies and satires before his twenty-fifth year. There is no doubt that he visited Italy in order to proceed to Jerusalem but prevented from doing so, he passed over into Spain, where he studied the laws, the language and the arts of Spain. His collection of books contained many Spanish writers. The earliest portrait of Donne, dated 1591, bears a Spanish motto. The spirit of Italian life and literature and influence of Spanish philosophers and theologians dominated his early poetry. He also came across other Catholics who, like him, felt terribly the harassment and persecution they were subject to. John Donne wrote of this period: "I had my first breeding and conversation with men of suppressed and afflicted religion (Catholicism), accustomed to the respite of death and hungry of an imagined martyrdom." These were the days of inner conflict. His soul was torn between Catholicism and Anglicanism. Ultimately, by 1597 he must have embraced the Church of England, when he entered the service of Sir Thomas Egerton. But before 1597, Donne enlisted as a volunteer in two combined military and naval expeditions. The Cadiz Expedition of 1556 and Azore Expedition of 1597 show that he was an adherent of the Earl of Essex His. The Storm and The Calm describe the experiences of his voyage. It was during the expedition that he came in contact with Thomas, the eldest son of Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He served Egerton for four years as Secretary. He would have got promotion and advancement in public service had he not committed the indiscretion of contracting a run-away marriage with Anne More, daughter of Sir George More of Losely and niece of Egerton's second wife. Possibly Donne miscalculated, as he thought this marriage would strengthen his claims to promotion. On the contrary, Egerton dismissed him from service. The reconciliation with More, his father-in-law, saved him from a long imprisonment.

Donne's conversion of Anglicanism:- A word may be said about his conversion to Anglicanism. Brought up among the Catholics in early age, his belief in the old faith struggled against the impact of the Established Church. Donne was no hypocrite; he knew the shortcomings of the Church of Rome; his intellectual spirit detached itself from Catholicism. His conversion to Anglicanism was not due to opportunism or expediency but intellectual persuasion. Even then, in later life he felt, to some extent, a sort of spiritual unrest:

Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse so bright and clear...

Donne's hasty and imprudent marriage meant the loss of a promising and stable public career. The years from 1601 to 1609 were full of fluctuating fortunes, when Donne had to depend on the generosity of his patron, Sir Robert Drury, the Countess of Beford, Lord Hay, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, who helped him in different ways. The Pseudo Martyr (1610) shows him definitely on the Anglician side, trying to defend the oath of allegiance.

Two loves of Donne: - Donne had two loves—poetry, the mistress of his youth, and Divinity, the wife of his mature age. Equally remote he stood from the ascetic ideal. He believed in the joy of living and the seduction of poetry. Donne followed the middle path between blind faith and reformation.

To adore or scorn an image, or protest,
May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
To stand inquiring right is not to stray;
To sleep or run wrong is.

Donne's satiric genius found expression in his satire on heresy and on women. In The Progress of the Soul (1601), he traces the progress of the soul of heresy from the fall of Eve to the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The career of Donne entered a prosperous phase by his entering the Ministry of the Church of England in 1615. His steps to the altar, had cost him much misery and anguish. His pursuits were now controversial but devout. His sermons and poems written during this period reflect the complexity of his character, his varied erudition and his alert mind. The letters in verse written to different persons reflect his moods and interests. These metaphysical compliments and hyperboles need not make us forget the intensification of religious feeling and inner experience which found expression in the Holy Sonets. His Divine Poems, likewise, show the conflict of faith and reason, of hope and despair, and the penitence of a soul which has undergone a purgation of emotional experience. And yet the last poems queerly blend harshness with a sonorous harmony.

Some of his poems are in the amorous Cavalier tradition; such is his celebrated song Go and Catch a Falling Star, which avers that no-where lives a woman true and fair. In something of the same tradition is the poem Love's Deity, beginning:

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost
Who died before the god of love was born.

In a somewhat different strain, one more like his religious poems, is A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. It is for his religious poetry, however, that Donne is most admired. Among the best of these are masterful sonnet Death, with the inspired couplet:

One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more, Death, thou shah die:

and the powerful A Hymn To God The Father, spun out of amazing puns on the poet's own name: 'When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done....".

Donne—the Dean of St Paul's

In 1619, Donne, the Chaplain, accompanied his friend the Earl of Doncaster to Germany. He was promoted to the post of Dean of St. Paul's in 1621. His sermons attracted large audiences. During his serious sickness he composed a few devotional poems including the hymns Since I am Coming and Wilt thou forgive. Donne felt greatly comforted by the first hymn: "The words of that hymn have restored me to the same thoughts of joy that possessed my soul in my sickness when I composed it". During his second sickness in 1630, he gave orders for his own monument which still stands in St. Paul's. He died in London on 31st March 1631.

Conclusion: - Donne left a deep and pervasive influence on English poetry. The metaphysical lyricists owed a great debt to him. Sometimes, his followers excelled him in happy conceit, passion and paradoxical reasoning. And yet he gave a sincere and passionate quality to the Elizabethan lyric. He interwove argument with poetry. In spite of its intellectual content, his poems attract us with a sense of vision, an intensity of feeling, and a felicity of expression. He is one of those great poets who have left a mark on the history of English poetry. Look at the compliments in verses below:

That never any one could before become,
So great a monarch, in so small a room,
He conquered rebel passions, ruled them so,
As under-spheres by the first Mover go,
Banished so far their working, that we can
But know he had some, for we knew him man.
Then let his last excuse his first extremes,
His age saw vision, though his youth dream'd dreams'
—Sir Lucius Carie

The Age of John Donne

The age of Donne was an age of transition, standing midway between the age of Shakespeare and the Jacobean age (1572-1631). The age of Donne would effectively and substantially cover the first thirty years of the seventeenth century. This age stands midway between the age of Shakespeare-and the age of Milton. There is, however, some over-lapping which cannot be avoided because literary periods or ages cannot be separated chronologically.

It was a period of remarkable literary activity, a sort of prolongation of the Elizabethan age. The revival of learning had influenced not only Italy and Germany but also England. The classics were studied minutely and from a new angle. The re-discovery of the literature and culture of the past-known as humanism-gave the writers a new outlook on life. Life was a gay game and not a sorry penance. The new ideal man was to be a perfect courtier, a perfect soldier, a perfect writer and, above all, a perfect gentleman. For this, he had to undergo comprehensive training and a rigorous discipline.

(A) Historical and Political Perspective

The age of Donne was a period of transition. Many changes in the political, social and economic domains were being effected. Colonial expansion and increase in industry and trade made people materialistic. The study of medieval literature developed the minds of the readers. Though education was not so widespread, the common man spared no opportunity of obtaining knowledge from any source. Medieval beliefs held their ground both in Donne and his contemporaries.

The Reformation was a direct challenge to Rome. Why should Pope be supreme in the matters of religion? Religion, after all, is a personal matter and no dictation should be tolerated from-outside. Nationalism in its wider connotation was responsible not only for a new literature, but also a new faith. The abuses and weaknesses of the Catholic religion were laid bare. The new Church of England came into being. Donne, like some of his contemporaries, felt within himself the conflict of faith. His scepticism, his humanism and his learning made him challenge the faith of his ancestors. The result was that after a good deal of heart-searching and vacillation, Donne embraced the Established Church of England by 1598. But it was not until he was ordained in 1615 that he became a confirmed Anglican.

Peace and prosperity of Queen Elizabeth: - The heritage of Queen Elizabeth, who died in 1603, was one of peace and prosperity. It was also one of centralization. Although her monarchy had not been an absolute one, she delegated her authority wisely, and patriotism was loyalty to the Queen. Religion and politics were closely linked. Elizabeth, as the supreme head of the Church of England, maintained religious tolerance as the Puritan and Catholic minorities strengthened. Elizabethan developments in science were great, and included new discoveries in navigation, astronomy, cartography and medicine. England came to accept the Copemican view of the earth instead of the Ptolemic system.

James I and disillusionment: - James I, formerly James V of the Scotland, took over the English throne in 1603 at the death of Elizabeth. Though widely hailed at first, Englishmen rapidly became disillusioned with him. James did not understand the people he ruled, nor the nature of his office. He allowed his favourites and the Spanish government to influence him; his failure to recognize the rising power of Parliament, his reversion to rigid views of absolute monarchy, and the luxury and the corruption of his rule, and religious schisms widened and Puritanism and Roman Catholicism became more militant in their fight against the established Church of England. Political strife, intermingled with growing religious dissension, was brought to a head by his insistence on the oneness of Church and state.

Pessimism and optimism in the age of Donne: - In such circumstances, the spirit of the age became one of doubt and scientific analysis. The stretching of space in astronomy and geography, and the recognition of the great, unexplored territories in an expanding world threw man's place in the scheme of things into doubt. Both pessimism and optimism were offshoots of this need and quest for authority, the former as a natural manifestation of man's insecurity in a world increasingly governed by scientific law indifferent to man's position in the universe; the latter, as a natural assertion of man's greater control of his environment and a better life. It was an age of psychology, of biography, and of self-analysis at all social levels, as the works of Izaak Walton, John Donne, or Robert Burton show; it was also an age of scientific materialism as the works of Bacon and Newton show.

The conflict between the Church and the State: - The conflict between Church and State led men to wonder which was superior, with the answer resting in man's own conscience. The questioning of civil authority, of where true sovereignty should lie, made it possible to rebel against a king. The growth of the middle class, the rise of political parties, and the estrangement of the Puritans led to a long civil war. Charles I, who began his rule in 1629, following the death of his father, was beheaded in 1649, whereupon a Commonwealth was begun by the Puritans, leading to the eventual military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell, who, nevertheless, brought some measure of peace and stability to a turbulent England. Yet the idea of a military dictatorship was abhorrent to Englishmen and upon Cromwell's death in 1660, Parliament invited Charles II, in exile in France, to return to England and resume the rule of the Stuart kings.

The discovery of the physical world in the age of Donne: - The discovery of the physical world was another aspect of this age. Columbus discovered America and Vasco de Gama found a new route to India. The English ships sailed round the world and revealed the riches and the glories of ancient but hitherto-unknown lands. Donne was intensely interested in the extension of the limits and the knowledge of the physical world. His comparisons, references and allusions to different lands and the maps of new regions show conclusively that he was inspired by the wonder and the expanding horizon of the world he lived in:

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown.
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

The creative faculty of writers was encouraged to imagine new worlds and islands on the basis of the new discoveries.

(B) Social, Economic and Intellectual Perspective

The seventeenth century was fundamentally an age of transition and revolution. The old medieval world of ideas was undergoing rapid transformation. But there was an element of underlying continuity of tradition. So, one of the basic features of this age is the presence of a tension between the old and the new. The medieval thinker was religious. His outlook on science was theological and metaphysical. He was interested in the origin and the final end of man.

The approach of the new science was quite different The scientific thinker was interested in the world itself. He expressed a concern with the sequence of phenomena. He, therefore, appealed to observation and experiment. Thus, there was far-reaching repercussion on the creative minds of the age. For example, John Donne indicated the scepticism of the conflict between the old and the new. In his poem, The First Anniversary, he indicated that the earth was shaking under his feet. His central problem was the relation of man to God. Previous explanations of this problem had already been displaced by the new trend in scientific thinking. The dichotomy between religion and science, reason and faith, in no small measure affected the intellectual altitude of the seventeenth century. Jacobean pessimism had its origin in this dichotomy. If we consider the representative minds of the seventeenth century, we might say that "normality consists in incongruity".

In domains of human experience, we note the medieval and the Renaissance attitude co-existing in the seventeenth century. This is especially evident in many of the attitudes of the seventeenth century life. The Petrarchans praised love and in the Elizabethan lyrics we find the influence of Petrarch. But the medieval attitude to love was ambiguous. On the one hand, it condemned all love of created beings; on the other hand, love had to be tolerated as a necessary passion. Courtly love represented this evil aspect of love. But the attitude of the church was modified partly by Neo-Platonism. The Neo-Platonics were acutely aware of the love of God, through the world of the senses. They saw in human love a reflection of the divine love. According to Neo-Platonics, love held the world together.

Typical Renaissance poets apply these philosophical conceptions to the realm of erotic love. Beauty was the divine idea in the material object and love was the perception of that idea. The Renaissance Neo-Platonist found ideal truth in the beauty of his mistress and he could transcend into higher things by his love for her. The lover loved with a religious fervour. Thus, in the period of Renaissance, Neo-Platonism gavel to the conception of love a totally different significance than the one which medieval religion had given to it. An attitude of lyrical irony towards this new significance, is the essence of Donne's love lyrics. Donne expresses both attitudes to love. In fact, John Donne sums up the intellectual situation of the seventeenth century in his poem The First Anniversary:

And new philosophy calls all in doubt.
The element of fire is put out;
The sun is lost, and the earth, and no man's wit
Can well direct him when to look for it.

And freely men confess that this world is spent
When in the planets and the firmament
They seek so many new; they seek that this
Is crumbled out again to his atomies,
It is all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply and all relation.

Empirical science: - Empirical science was a new development bringing about rapid changes in the sphere of science. There was unfettered exercise of reason and judgement. Copernicus gave a new view of astronomy. His views were further supported by Galileo with his telescope. This development gave a rude set-back to the old Ptolemic cosmology which changed the whole mental horizon of Europe. Its pressure did not attract so far literary figures of the day. Donne did not refute the old Ptolemic cosmology.

Habit of reading: - Habit of reading was increasing gradually in this period. There was considerable increase in the number of books printed annually. But many of the books were yet circulated in manuscripts among the authors, friends and acquaintances. The poems of Donne and Herbert were read chiefly in manuscript. But Browne's Religio Medici was printed. The writers of this period reveal an astonishing versatility and range of knowledge.

University education: - There was no change in the pattern of University education. The under-graduates used to study the traditional subjects like logic and metaphysics. The aim of education was for imparting theological knowledge and thus producing priests. There were theological contro-versies at Cambridge.

(C) Literary Perspective

Donne, the founder of a new school of poetry: - A wave of romance swept the minds of creative writers. There was a spirit of adventure in literary output, in the efforts to create new literary forms and metres, the desire to reject the old traditions and conventions of theme and expression in literary writing. Donne was wholly unconventional in theme and expression. His independent spirit refused to submit to Petrarchan convention and Platonic idealism. His love poetry is fresh and original; he goes deep into his heart and dissects his own Elizabethan feelings. Donne's revolt against the sweetness and harmony of verse is illustrated by the ruggedness and dissonance of his lines. He went to the colloquial, to that which was nearest to the speech of men, for revealing his feelings. And yet he did not abandon the Elizabethan conceit. He gave it a new form, a new vitality. He made his poetry dramatic and rhetorical. For example, he asserted:

For God's sake, hold your tongue and let me love.

Donne is original not only in the matter of love but also in the concept of woman. Except his beloved, all women are false and faithless:

Nor can you more judge woman's thoughts by tears,
Than by her shadow, what she wears,
O perverse sex, where none is true but she,
Who's therefore true, because her truth kills me.

Probably in his early youth, he had known many women inside out. He knew love as sex attraction, as an impulse for physical gratifica-tion. He boasted of his conquests and ridiculed jealous husbands in his poems. But at the same time, he was not oblivious of love as the marriage of true minds, as the merging of one soul into another. His

passionate pleas to his beloved for union in Love's infiniteness is a case in point. True love is neither subject to time nor decay :

All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay.

Conclusion: - Every great writer is both a creature and creator of the age. In certain aspects, he is influenced by his times; in certain ways, he gives a new ideal to the age in which, he is born. Donne reflects in his poetry the aspiration, the adventure and the conflict of the age. He reacts to the humanism and the religious fervour of his time. He also gives a new direction to the literary activity of his age. He, in a sense, founded—the "metaphysical lyric" which was practised by a score of writers. He also set up new traditions in versification. By and large, Donne must be regarded as an original poet, a poet who gave much more than what he borrowed from his age:

So the fire,
That fills with spirit and heat the Delphic quire,
Which kindled first by the Promethean breath,
Glow'd here a while, lies quench't now in the death;
The Muse's garden with Pedantic weeds
O'rspred was purg'd by thee; the lazie seeds
Of servile imitation thrown away;
And fresh invention planted, thou did pay
The debts of our penurious bankrupt age.

An intellectuality of temper made Donne grapple with his sensations and emotions and transform them into intellectual moulds. In this lies his unification of sensibility, otherwise his thinking is unsystematic. There is an indiscriminate mixing of the old and the new, and he arrives at no synthesis as scientific thinker, although it is with him that the new temper of the Renaissance culture, and the scientific temper, enters poetry. Of all the poets of the Jacobean age, he most successfully articulated the scientific ideas of his time. It was an age of intellectual and cultural transition and Donne was analytically concerned with the forces shaping contemporary thought and sensibility. It was this duality of his mind which, more than anything else, made him the founder of a new school of poetry.

The English Metaphysical Poets and Poetry

Introduction: - The term "metaphysical" as applied to Donne and his followers is, more or less, a misnomer. However, it has come to stick. It was Dryden who first applied the term in relation to Donne's poetry. "He affected," complained Dryden, "the metaphysics, not only in his satires but in his amorous verses." Dr. Johnson borrowed Dryden's ideas, and in his "Life of Cowley" called Cowley a poet of the metaphysical school of Donne.

He derided Cowley's pedantic exhibition of his learning and vocabulary in his poems. But the exhibition of their learning was only one of the many characteristics of the metaphysical poets. Their love of daring imagery, enigmatic expression, and a peculiar sensualism uneasily wedded to a mystical conception of religion, their intellectualism and taste for the expression of novel ideas in a novel manner, were some other qualities. The term "metaphysical" denotes, according to Saintsbury, "the habit, common to this school of poets, of always seeking to express something after, something behind, the simple, obvious first sense and suggestion of a subject." In this way Donne and his followers strike a note of variance from Spenser and the Spenserians and Elizabethan poetry in general.

Composite Quality: - According to Grierson, metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which like Dante's Divine Comedy and Goethe's Faust "has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and of the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence." It arises when the physical world loses its stability, and the people lose faith in the orthodox patterns of thought and belief. At such times sensitive poets turn their attention inwards, and through self-analysis aim at better understanding of themselves, their situation in the world, and their relation to a philosophic or idealised "otherworld." The age in which Donne lived witnessed a gradual crumbling ?: the old order of things, the disturbing progress of science, and the scepticism which went with it. "The new philosophy", said Donne, "calls all in doubt". The realisation that the earth is not the centre of the universe, and the inference that man is not the greatest of all :reatures, dealt a rude blow to the orthodox Christian complacency. Donne's search for some principle of coherence in a world of chaos led ~.im to the reconciliation of opposites-resolution of doubts and the :-.tegration of the world of reality with the world of the imagination, of sensual cynicism and highflown mysticism, and even of carnal and spiritual longings. This led him surely to the employment of what have been dubbed "metaphysical conceits" and an occasional display of rot-of-the-way, recondite learning. The subtler points of his feeling found outlet quite often in obscure and enigmatic expression which has been the delight of some, and the despair of many readers. In spite of Donne's obscurity and persistent intellectualism it may be said to his credit as a love poet that he imported into English love poetry a vigorous element of hard realism (which sometimes amounts even to cynicism). In this respect he scored a big advance over Spenser and his school who glorified Platonic love and celebrated almost unearthly and highly conventional mistresses of the Petrarchan tradition. Donne's "ead was accepted by a large number of poets succeeding him. Among them may be mentioned Herbert, Vaughan, Carew, Crashaw, Trasherne, early Milton, and Cowley. These poets are often classed together as "metaphysicals" or "metaphysical poets". Apart from them the influence of Donne and his school may also be discerned in the work of a sizable number of poets who flourished in the Caroline period. In fact the metaphysical vein was in evidence as a major current in the stream of English poetry till the age of Dryden, when it gave place to nee-classicism ushered in by him.

Now let us consider some salient characteristics of the poetry of the metaphysical school.

"Undissociated Sensibility": - The most important characteristic of the metaphysicals is their possession of, or striving after, what T. S. Eliot calls "undissociated sensibility" (the combination of thought and feeling) which Milton was to "split" later. However, Prof. L. C. Knights in his essay "Bacon and the Dissociation of Sensibility" in Explorations puts forward the view that sensibility came to be dissociated much earlier by Bacon. The metaphysicals are "constantly amalgamating disparate experiences" and forming new wholes out of materials so diverse as "reading Spinoza, falling in love and smelling the dinner cooking." Donne has the knack of presenting together different objects which have between them a quite remote though undeniable similarity. He connects the abstract with the concrete, the remote with the near, the physical with the spiritual, and the sublime with the commonplace and sometimes during moments of the most serious meditation breaks into a note of sardonic humour or pathetic frivolity. This juxtaposition and, sometimes, interfusion of apparently dissimilar or exactly opposite objects often pleasantly thrills us into a new perception of reality. And Donne, says Hayward, is a "thrilling poet." Donne wrote :

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one,
Inconstancy naturally hath begot

A constant habit.

These "contraries" meeting in Donne's poetry "vex" not only the poet but also, sometimes, his readers. His successors handled these contraries rather crudely, with very unpleasant effects.

Metaphysical Wit and Conceits: - Dr. Johnson was the first critic to point out the tendency of the metaphysical poets to yoke radically different images forcibly together. This tendency arose, according to T. S. Eliot, from their undissociated sensibility. But it may be objected that Donne and his followers do not really seem to be serious and spontaneous in the tendency noted by Dr. Johnson. When Donne compares a pair of lovers to a pair of compasses, is he not speaking with his tongue in cheek? Such a tendency is a true manifest ation of the metaphysical wit. Hobbes in his Leviathan defined wit as the capability to find out similarities between things which may look very dissimilar. When Carew said that Donne

ruled, as he thought fit,
The universal monarchy of wit

He was most probably referring to wit in this sense. All the metaphysicals have an incorrigible aptitude for witty comparisons, juxtaposition, and imagery, and what may be called "the metaphysical conceit"'....some strained or far-fetched comparison or figure of speech. Dr. Johnson defined the wit of the metaphysicals as a kind of discordia concors, combination of dissimilar images. Let us consider some instances of this discordia concors. In Donne's Twicknam Garden we meet with the expression "spider love." Now, we are used to splendid, decorative, or moving images in connexion with the subject of love; but the word "spider" is quite contrary to our expectation. In the same poem the lover's tears are called the wine of love. The poet invites lovers to come equipped with phials to collect his tears! In another poem we have the very quaint line:

A holy, thirsty dropsy melts me yet.

The word "holy" is highly serious, "thirsty" stands for a simple revsical need, and "dropsy"...the name of a disease...has a clinical tKcTig. Again, consider the lines :

Go tell court-huntsmen, that the king will ride;
Call country 'ants to harvest offices.
See how the king and country ants are juxtaposed.

Learnedness: - The poetry of the metaphysicals has the impress of very vast learning. Whatever be the demerits of the metaphysical poets, even Dr. "rhnson had to admit that for writing such poetry it was at least -ecessary to think and read. However, it may be said that this poetry is r-ain-sprung, mot heart-felt. It is intellectual and witty to a fault. Dr. "onnson noted, that the metaphysical poets sometimes drew their conceits from "recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers rf poetry." Learning is an asset for a poet. Our quarrel with the -netaphysicals is not that they are learned but that, sometimes, they show off their learning just to impress the reader. An imaginative and learned writer, says Edmund Blunden, "calls for annotation, but the object of his difficult a'llusions is to give shape to his ideas of the world, of the soul, not to de/cide matters of astronomy, physics, geography and natural history/' Many of Donne's followers do not always prove so "imagin ative."

Paradoxical Ratiocination: - According to Grierson, the hallmarks of metapjhysical poetry are pftssionate feeling and paradoxical ratiocination. The same critic observes that the metaphysicals "exhibited deductive reasoning carried to a high pitch." Too often does Donne state at the beginning of a poem a hopelessly insupportable proposition, which he defends soon after. Consider the poem "The Indifferent" which opens as below:

I can love both fair and brown.

Whatever qualities a woman has are made into so many reasons for loving her! Again, note this in his poem "The Broken Heart":

He is stark mad, who ever says,
That he hath been in love one hour.

With his tremendous ratiocinative ability Donne defends this proposition. In "The Flea" the proposition presented to his mistress is:

This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed. and marriage temple is.

It seems an unpromising subject, but there are twenty-seven lines of packed argument to drive it home. This excessive intellectualism not unoften makes for obscurity. See, for instance, the following clever lines:

You that are she and you, that's doubk she,
In her dead face half of yourself shall see.

Commenting on these, Tucker Brooke says: 'Tte meaning can be made out, but the satisfaction of his mental ingenuity in so doing is the only reward the reader will receive." Lucas compla'ns: "Donne treats poetry as a trapeze for mental frisks." Clay Hunt disapproves such "pyrotechnics of wit."

Diction and Versification: - In style and versification Donne and his followeis reacted against the cloying sweetness and harmony of the school of Spenser. The metaphysicals deliberately avoided conventional poetic expressions as they had lost their meaning through O'eruse. According to Wordsworth the language of poetry should "the natural language of impassioned feeling." The metaphysicals employed very "prosaic" words as if they were scientists or shopkeepers. The result is that in'their work we often stumble against ragged and unpoetic words we seldom expect in serious poetry. The versification of the metaphysicals is also, like their diction, coirse and jerky in contrast to the honeyed smoothness of much of Elizabethan poetry. Their revolt, according to Grierson, is due to two motives:

(i) The desire to startle; and
(ii) The desire to approximate poetic to direct, unconventional colloquial speech.

Donne could "sing" whenever he liked, but often he seems to be bending and cracking the metrical pattern to the rhetoric of direct and vehement utterance." He very often throws all prosodic considerations to the winds and distributes his stresses not according to the metre but according to the sense. "In his work", say Tucker Brooke, "the Pierian flood is no clear spring: it is more like a Yellowstone geyser: overheated, turbid, explosive, and far from pure." Donne and other metaphysicals' metrical infelicity has been adversely commented upon by all.-But, to be fair, we may say that Donne writes as one who will say what he has to say without regard to the conventions of poetic diction or smooth verse; but what he has to say is subtle and surprising and so are often the metrical effects with which it is presented.

Religious Poetry of the Metaphysicals: - Most of the metaphysical poets wrote on religion. Indeed, we owe most of our good religious poetry to them. It must be emphasised that all the metaphysicals do not write exactly alike. All of them are strongly marked individuals. The English metaphysical poetry from Donne to Traherne should be treated not as a type but as a movement. Donne's religious poetry has all the qualities we have detailed above. Herbert followed Donne in most respects. He has been called the "saint" of the metaphysical school. His approach to God and Christ is full of, what

Edmund Gosse calls, "intimate tenderness." But he does use the imagery and conceits of the Donnean type. His Temple was the most popular Anglican poem of the age. Herbert had two distinguished followers— Vaughan and Crashaw. They acknowledged their debts to Herbert, but they had tempers fundamentally their own. Vaughan is temperamentally a mystic though he uses conceits after the manner of Donne and Herbert-conceits such as "stars shut up shop" when the arrival of the morning is described. He is at his best while dealing with such themes as childhood, communion with nature, and eternity. His thoughts concerning childhood, in his poem The Retreat are largely echoed by Wordsworth in the Ode on the Intimations of Immortality in Childhood. His poem The World has a daring image:

I saw eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light.
All calm as it was bright.

Crashaw's poetry is uneven work. Whereas Herbert is a gentle stream, Crashaw is an impetuous torrent. He is quite undisciplined and given to moods of religious exaltation and excitement. He has a taste for daiing images and metaphysical conceits. The eyes of Mary Magdalene in The Weeper are described as

Two walking baths; two weeping motions;
Potable and compendious oceans.

"He sings", says a critic, "the raptures of soul visited by divine love in terms as concrete and glowing as any human lover has ever used to celebrate an earthly passion." Herein, again, his debt to Donne is discernible. It is the mystic vein in Thomas Traherne which tempts a critic to classify him with Vaughan among the metaphysicals. Traherne is not a great poet, however. He contemplates the beauty of God's universe till it stirs in him a mystic response. Like Vaughan he idealises childhood as the age in which a human being is nearest God. Crashaw was the only Roman Catholic among the metaphysical poets; and Andrew Marvell, Milton's secretary, the only Puritan. Unlike most Puritans. Marvell was not a hide-bound fanatic; rather he appears in the colour of a Christian humanist dating from the Elizabethan age. He as a poet has been assigned a quite high status by the school o modern critics led by F. R. Leavis. But in him we find English poetry already on its way to the neo-classicism of Dryden's school. His greatest poem "To His Coy Mistress" is secular (and not religious) in theme and execution. He urges his "coy" mistress to shed her coyness and make the best of the opportunity granted by Time to them to make merry.

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime...
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.

The following lines have tragic pathos wedded to a metaphysical conceit:

The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

The Contribution of the Metaphysical Poets to English Literature:

(1) The metaphysical poets have given to the English language its best religious poetry. The moods of incisive introspection and mysticism could best be expressed not through commonplace, conventional poetic images and language but unconventional and bold imagery which would jolt the mind and spirit of the reader into an intimate rapport

with the mood of the poet. Herbert, Donne, Vaughan, Crashaw, and Traherne are the most important among the religious English poets of all ages.

(2) In the field of love poetry, too, the contribution of the metaphysicals is considerable and quite important from the historical point of view. When Donne appeared on the stage, Spenser and his followers were following the Petrarchan tradition of highly sentimental and idealised love poetry which had not much to do with reality. Donne demolished this claptrap and started a vein of highly realistic, frankly sensual, and sometimes, downright cynical, amatory verse. He was critical of the Elizabethan sonneteers and lyricists who put their mistresses, real or imaginary, on the pedestal of a deity, and pretended to woo them as their "servants,"' dying or living in accordance with their moods of rejection or acceptance of their supplications. Donne was frank enough.

Love's not so pure and abstract as they use
To say which have no mistress but their Muse.
Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do

(3) Even in the ruggedness and occasional vulgarity of their r-ction and versification the metaphysical did some service to English poetry in that they made the poets realise that the "smoothness of rrmbers" alone does not make for great poetry. What was needed was a hard core of sense and deft handling of experience related to the poet himself who reserved for himself the liberty to employ whatever diction and style he thought was eminently suitable for his purpose. After Donne and his followers the mere music of poetry could not capture for it any appreciative audience.

(4) The intellectualism of the metaphysical poetry and the compositeness of its imagery, and even the crabbed nature of its style, secured for it a continuous stream of readers from generation to generation. In the modern times all these qualities appear agreeable to a large number of readers. The modern poets, particularly T. S. Eliot, living in an age of crumbling values (like the age of Donne), have found a guide and a source of inspiration in Donne. It is not surprising, then, that in the modern critical canon Donne is rated as one of the best English poets.

John Donne: a love poet

Donne was the first English poet to challenge and break the supremacy of Petrarchan tradition. Though at times he adopts the Petrarchan devices, yet his imagery and rhythm, texture and colour of his love poetry is different. There are three distinct strains of his love poetry – Cynical, Platonic and Conjugal love.

Giving an allusion to Donne's originality as the poet of love, Grierson makes the following observation: "His genius temperament and learning gave a certain qualities to his love poems … which arrest our attention immediately. His love poems, for instance, do have a power which is at once realistic and distracting."

Donne's greatness as a love-poet arises from the fact that this poetry covers a wider range of emotions than that of any previous poet. His poetry is not bookish but is rooted in his personal experiences. Is love experience were wide and varied and so is the emotional range of his love-poetry. He had love affairs with a number of women. Some of them were lasting and permanent, other were only of a short duration.

Donne is quite original in presenting the love situations and moods. The "experience of love" must produce a "sense of connection" in both the lovers. This "sense of connection" must be based on equal urge and longing on both the sides.

"The room of love" must be shared equally by the two partners.

Donne magnifies the ideal of "Sense of connection" into the physical fulfillment of love.

"My face in thine eyes thine in mime appears"

This aspect of love helps him in the virtual analysis of the experience of love. Donne was a shrewd observer who had first hand knowledge of "love and related affairs. That is why in almost all his poems, he has a deep insight.

His love as expressed in his poetry was based not on conventions but on his own experiences. He experienced all phase of love – platonic, sensuous, serene, cynical, conjugal, illicit, lusty, picturesque and sensual. He could also be grotesque blending thought with passion.

Another peculiar quality of Donne's love lyrics is its "metaphysical strain". His poems are sensuous and fantastic. Donne's metaphysical strain made his reader confused his sincerity.

Donne's genius temperament and learning gave to his love poems power and fascination. There is a depth and rang of feeling unknown to the majority of Elizabethan poets. Donne's poetry is startlingly unconventional even when he dallies, half ironically, with the hyperboles of petrarch.

Donne is realistic not an idealistic. He knows the weakness of Flesh, the pleasure of sex, the joy of secret meeting. However he tries to establish a relationship between the body and the soul. Donne is very realistic poet.

Grierson distinguished three distinct strains in it. First there is the cynical strain. Secondly, there is the strain f conjugal love to be noticed in poems like "valediction: forbidding mourning". Thirdly, there is platonic strain. The platonic strain is to b found in poems like "Twicknam Garden", "The Funeral", "The Blossoms", and "The Primroses". These poems were probably addressed to the high-born lady friends. Towards them he adopts the helpless pose of flirtations and in high platonic vein boasts that:

Different of sex no more we know
Than our Guardian Anglles doe

In between the cynical realistic strain and the highest spiritual strain, there are a number of poems which show an endless variety of mood and tone. Thus thee are poems in which the tone is harsh, others which are coarse and brutal, still other in which he holds out a making threat to his faithless mistress and still others in which he is in a reflective mood. More often that not, a number of strains and moods are mixed up in the same poem. This makes Donne as a love poet singularly, original, unconventional and realistic.

Whatever may be the tone or mood of a particular poem, it is always an expression of some personal experience and is, therefore, presented with remarkable force, sincerity and seriousness. Each poem deals with a love situation which is intellectually analyzed with the skill of an experienced lawyer.

Hence the difficult nature of his poetry and the charge of obscurity have been brought against him. The difficulty of the readers is further increased by the extreme condensation and destiny of Donne's poetry.

The fantastic nature of the metaphysical conceits and poetry would become clear even we examine a few examples. In "Valediction: Forbidden Mourning" true lovers now parted are likened to the legs of a compass. The image is elaborated at length. The lovers are spiritually one, just as the head of the compass is one even when the legs are apart. One leg remains fixed and the other moves round it. The lover cannot forget the

beloved even when separated from her. The two loves meet together in the end just as the two legs of the compass are together again, as soon as circle has been drawn.

At other times, he uses equally extravagated hyperboles. For example, he mistakes his beloved to an angel, for to imagine her less than an angle would be profanity.

In Donne's poetry, there is always an "intellectual analysis" of emotion. Like a clever lawyer, Donne gives arguments after arguments in support of his points of view. Thus in "Valediction: Forbidden Mourning" he proves that true lovers need not mourn at the time of parting. In "Canonization" he establishes that lovers are saints of love and in "The Blossome" he argues against the petrarchan love tradition. In all this Donne is a realistic love poet.

John Donne as a metaphysical poet

Metaphysical poetry, in an etymological sense, is poetry on subjects which exist beyond the physical world. In other words, it is a type of poetry dealing with abstract or philosophical subjects such as love, religion, God, beauty, faith and so on. But in reality the poetry which comprises the ideas or aspects that – physical love leading to spiritual union or religious, argumentative presentation of emotion, terseness of expression, use of conceit and wit in profusion, skillful use of colloquial language instead of Elizabethan lucid diction with the abrupt opening can be considered to be metaphysical. Originally the term 'Metaphysical Poetry' was coined by John Dryden and later popularised by Samuel Johnson and the features of the school which unite the various authors are quite numerous. As well as making widespread use of conceit, paradox and punning, the metaphysical poets drew their imagery from all sources of knowledge particularly from science, theology, geography and philosophy. However, John Donne is the founder of the school of metaphysical poetry and the other practitioners of the type of poetry are Crashaw, Cowley, Denham, Davenant, Herbert, Marvell, Vaughan and Waller.

The most striking quality of Donne's poetry is the use of metaphysical conceit which is a figure of speech in which two far-fetched objects or images of very different nature are compared. It surprises its readers by its ingenious discovery and delights them by its intellectual quality. Such conceits are available in his poetry. Such a famous conceit occurs in the poem titled "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning". The conceit reads as:

> **"If they be two, they are two so**
> **A stiff twin compasses are two;**
> **They soul, the fixed foot, makes no show**
> **To move, but doth, if th' other do."**

Here in the poem the two lovers are compared to the two feet of a compass. The lover is compared to the moving foot and the beloved to the fixed foot consecutively to show the ideal relationship between them. It is made clear that in this relationship the woman's part is passive and her place is in the home, while the man's duty is to move in the world of affairs. She stays in the centre apparently unmoving, but certainly as the outer foot moves around describing the circle, the inner foot moves too, revolving on the point which is the centre. The two, in fact, move in harmony and neither is unaffected by the movement of the other. At first sight such a comparison seems to be impossible but after the discovery of the underlying meaning it delights the readers.

Another leading feature of Donne's poetry is his dramatic presentation that arrests the attention of the readers very quickly. Like other famous poets, Donne has the capacity of opening a poem abruptly adding a dramatic quality to the poem. As we find such abruptness in opening the poem "The Canonization". The line goes as:

"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,"

Upon reading or hearing those opening lines, we can easily understand that the poem begins somewhat in the middle of a conversation. Now the more we advance, the more clear it becomes that why the speaker of the poem makes such a request to the unidentified listener.

Closely related to the dramatic directness and abruptness of opening is Donne's dexterous use of colloquial speech. This dramatic quality is strengthened by its colloquial tone. In the song: "Go and Catch a Falling Star" we can trace such a quality:

"Go, and catch a falling star,
Get with child a mandrake root,"

On perusing the two lines we will see that like many other poems Donne has employed colloquial language to make the poem more lifelike. From the lines it is clear that a conversation is going on between two people.

Through all the love poems of Donne, there runs a belief that physical passion is a good thing and he recognises the claim of body side by side with the souls. His love poems enhance its attraction and novelty by blending physical, spiritual and mystical love. Although there is a complexity in the poem, "The Ecstasy" Donne deals twin aspects of love - physical and spiritual; love here is concretised through physical enjoyment of sex and then turns in its pure essence, spiritual. The setting of the two lovers provides the physical closeness by their love is enriched by the mutual understanding of their souls and like heavenly beings that influence the actions of men through manifestation. The soul must express themselves through the bodies. The greatness of the poem lies in reconciling the opposites – physical love and spiritual love, the physical aspects of love must precede the spiritual union. Donne's poetry lies far reconciling dichotomy between psychical and spiritual shifting quickly from the physical to the spiritual fashion.

"The Sun Rising" is another poem illustrating the peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination. The delight of satisfied love is the feeling in the poem, but it is expressed in intellectual terms and not merely in an emotional tone. How well the fusion of feeling and thought is expressed in the finality of:

"She is all States, and all Princes, I
Nothing else is."

Passion is conveyed in images which are erudite, logical and of an intellectual nature. In the poem, we again see Donne's ratiocinative style, reasoning step by step towards his conclusion, which in this case, is that love is self-sufficient and unaffected by outside force.

Terseness is another characteristic of all the metaphysical poets. It is true in the case of Donne in particular. And the use of such terseness results in obscurity. Such compactness is traceable in "Go and Catch a Falling Star".

"No where
Lives a woman true, and fair."

In the compact idea Donne wants to show that just as it is impossible to catch a falling star in the sky, so a woman with both honesty and fairness is rare to find out as they first seem to be honest but later they are found to be different.

In addition to that, the poems "The Canonization", "Twicknam Garden", "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", "Go and Catch a Falling Star" and "The Sun Rising" in one or other

way deal with the abstract idea which is most dominating feature of the metaphysical poetry and is a must for this type of poetry.

Donne was the greatest of the metaphysical poets. In some of their poems he was equalled by Vaughan and Marvell and in religious poetry by Herbert. But the body of his work is poetry of a quality which, when compared with that of any other of these poets, is unsurpassed. When his images are understood in their function of communicating a state of mind, and his ideas in their power to give expression to emotion, Donne's poetry is appreciated for its wit, beauty and perception. In conclusion, considering all the characteristics of Donne's poetry as discussed above, Donne can be regarded as a true metaphysical poet. Although he was considered a minor poet till the 20th century, he is regarded as one of the major English poets by T.S. Eliot and other major modern poets.

Conceit in Donne's poetry

Many of John Donne's poems contain metaphysical conceits and intellectual reasoning to build a deeper understanding of the speaker's emotional state. A conceit can be defined as an extended, unconventional metaphor between objects that appear to be unrelated. Metaphysical conceit is a highly ingenious kind of conceit widely used by the metaphysical poets. It often exploits verbal logic to the point of the grotesque and sometimes creates such extravagant turns on meaning that they become absurd. The metaphysical conceit is characteristic of seventeenth century writers influence by John Donne, and became popular again in this century after the revival of the metaphysical poets. However, Donne is exceptionally good at creating unusual unions between different elements in order to illustrate his point and form a persuasive argument in his poems.

By using metaphysical conceits in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", Donne attempts to convince his beloved (presumably his wife) that parting is a positive experience which should not be looked upon with sadness. In the first stanza, Donne compares the speaker's departure to the mild death of virtuous men who pass on so peacefully that their loved ones find it difficult to detect the exact moment of their death. Their separation must be a calm transition like this form of death which Donne describes. The poet writes,

"Let us melt, and make no noise"

Then we find another example of conceit which was not found in any poems of any poets before. Here he compares the two lovers to the pair of legs of compass. Like the compass they have one central point (love) and two sides (bodies) which note in a circle. Here he says,

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soule the fix foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the 'other doe"

Similarly, in the poem, "The Good-Morrow", we find some startling and shocking or fantastic conceits which had never before found. Here he says, the lover is a whole world to his beloved and she is a whole world to him, not only that they are two better hemispheres who constitute the whole world. Here the poet says,

"Where can we finde two better hemispheres,
Without sharpe North, without declining West?"

Again he says that as the four elements, earth, air, fire and water were supposed to combine to form new substance, so two souls mix to form a new unity. The strength and

durability of this new unit is dependent upon how well the elements of the two souls are balanced, as we see from these lines from The Good-Morrow:

> **What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;**
> **It our two loves be one, or, thou and I**
> **Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.**

In the poem "The sunne Rising" there are a lot of conceits in almost every stanza. The poet says that the lover can eclipse and cloud the sun with a wink . He says,

> **"I could eclipse and cloud them with a winke"**

Again he says that the beloved lying in the bed by the lover's side is to his both west and East Indies; the beloved is all states and the lover is all princes. He says,

> **She's all states, and all Princes, I,**
> **Nothing else is"**

In the poem, "The Canonization", we find the use of conceit. Organic imagery is a strong point of this poem. In the second stanza, the poet says,

> **"Alas, alas. who's injur'd by my love?**
> **What merchant's ships have my sighs drown'd?"**

The poet assumes that a lover. ship have the power to drown ships, that his tears may flood the grounds, that his "colds" may bring about the season of winter, and that his "heats" may bed to the list of deaths by plague. (These are all fantastic hyperboles. The poet is, of course, mocking at the Petrarchan exaggeration). Then he says,

> **"We' are Tapers too and at our own cost die"**

The beloved is one fly, the lover is another fly. And they are tapers too. In then are to be found the Eagle and the Dove. They provide a clue to the riddle of the phoenix because they are one representing both sexes. These are all fantastic conceits.

In the poem "The Extasie", we find conceits. Here he says that the souls of the lovers have left their bodies temporarily and are communicating with each other (like two armies facing each other). And the images of the two lovers in each other's eyes are regarded as the lovers "propagation" or the issue which they have produced. And the two souls of the lovers have become one and the resultant soul is abler or finer than each taken singly. Moreover, the bodies are spheres, and the lovers' minds or souls the intelligences which move the sphere.

In the poem "The Flea", we find another use of conceit where the Flea is thought to be their marriage temple as well as their marriage bed because it sucks a tiny drop of blood from the lover's and the beloved's body. And according to the poet it means that they two have got married. Here he says,

> **"Marke but this flea ,and marke in this,**
> **Low little that which thou deny'st me is;**
> **Mee it suck'd first, and now sucks thee,**
> **And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee;"**

The killing of the flea will mean destroying three lives- those of the poet, his beloved and the insect. It will also be an act of sacrilege because a temple will be destroyed. He says that the beloved should surrender her body to the poet because she will, by doing so, lose just as little honour as the life she has lost by a drop of her blood having been sucked by the flea.

In summing up we can say that John Donne's poetry is abound with metaphysical conceits. Conceits are the effortless creation of John Donne. To him, conceits come to his

poetry as leaves come to the tree. And for the use of conceits he stands supreme and mostly for such uses of conceit, he becomes the best metaphysical poet.

Donne: A Religious Poet

The intensity of Donne's feeling and the inner conflict is reflected in his religious poetry. His religious sonnets and songs are intensely personal and sincere. Donne was a Catholic by birth. He felt humbled and persecuted like other Catholics of his age. Religion, for most of the people, was a matter of accident.

Those who liked antiquity and tradition turned to Rome, those who disliked formality and ritual turned to Geneva. But, religion should be, according to Donne, a matter of deliberate choice, made after careful study and consideration. Many of the principles Rome did not stand his intellectual inquiry. It is difficult to fix the precise date of his conversion. It is, however, Convenient to assume that by 1598, when Donne entered Sir Thomas Egerton's service, he must have embraced the Church of England. Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, could never have employed a distinguished Catholic for important public duty.

Donne's conversion to Anglicanism greatly influenced his poetry. Grierson calls this conversion, a "reconciliation, an acquiescence in the faith of his country—the established religion of his legal sovereign". Probably, the Renaissance spirit, leaning towards nationalism, was partly responsible for Donne's change of faith. But the conversion caused Donne some pangs and heart-searching. Dr. Johnson says: "A convert from Popery to Protestantism gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as anything that he retains; there is so much laceration of mind in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting". Undoubtedly, Donne felt this laceration of the mind and this conflict between the old and the new faith. "Show me dear Christ thy spouse so bright and clear". There was also the other conflict in Donne—the conflict between ambition and asceticism, between the prospects of civil service and the claims of a religious life. But after a number of years, Donne continued to retain a soft corner for Catholics.

MAIN ASPECTS OF DONNE'S RELIGIOUS POETRY

Donne was essentially a religious man, though he moved from one denomination to another. His spirit of rational faith continued throughout his life. The following are the main aspects of Donne's religious poetry:

Conflict and doubt: - As a man of the Renaissance, he could not but question the assumptions and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. Being born in a particular religion is one proposition and being convinced of the Tightness of one's faith, is quite another. As he was sceptical of the religious dogmas of the Catholic Church, he adopted the Anglican faith, but even so his mind was not at peace. He could not reconcile the inner conflicts and as such he prayed for God's mercy and grace, so that he might be able to build his faith on a sound foundation. In his A Hymn to God the Father, he ultimately arrives at a firm faith. It is perhaps the culmination of his spiritual quest.

Note of introspection: - The metaphysical clement which is so evident in his love poems, finds expression of an inner heart searching. He digs deep within himself in order to measure his sincerity and devotion to God and above all his consciousness of sin and the need of penitence. His fear of death—Donne must have seen many of his friends on their death-beds and their last struggles—makes him repent for his past follies and hence his prayer to God for His mercy and compassion. The Holy Sonets particularly maybe regarded as poems of repentance, and supplications for divine grace. Donne's

intention is not to preach morality or to turn men to virtue. Grierson writes in this connection: "To be didactic is never the first intention of Donne's religious poems, but rather, to express himself, to analyse and lay bare his own moods of agitation, of aspiration and of humiliation, in the quest of God, and the surrender of his soul to Him. The same erudite and surprising imagery, the same passionate, and reasoning strain, meet us in both".

The themes of his religious poetry: - Donne found the contemporary world dry and corrupt. He felt that its degeneration would lead to untold human misery. The main theme of his religious poems is the transitoriness of this world, the fleeting nature of physical joys and earthly happiness, the sufferings of the soul imprisoned in the body and the pettiness and insignificance of man. Above all, the shadow of death is all pervasiveand this makes him turn to Christ as the Saviour. Even so, his metaphysical craftsmanship treats God as 'ravisher' who saves him from the clutches of the Devil. Though Donne regarded the world a vanity of vanities, he could not completely detach himself from the joys of the world and there is a turn from other-worldliness to worldliness. However, we cannot doubt the sincerity of his religious feelings and his earnest prayer to God for deliverance. His moral earnestness is reflected in his consciousness of sin and unworthiness for deserving the grace of Christ He uses the images of Christ as a lover who will woo his soul.

Parallelism with love poetry: - There is a great similarity of thought and treatment between the love poems and holy sonnets, though the theme is different. The spirit behind the two categories of poems is the same. There is the same subtle spirit which analyses the inner experiences like the experiences of love. The same kind of learned and shocking imagery is found in the love poems:

Is the Pacific sea my home? or are
The Eastern riches? Is Jerusalem?
Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar.
All straits (and none but straits) are ways to them.
Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Ham, or Shem.

Similarly in his treatment of divine love, the poet uses sexual images in holy situations. As for example:

Betray kind husband thy spouse to cur sights,
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild Dove
Who is most true, and pleasing to thee then
When she's embraced and open to most men.

CRITICAL SURVEY OF DONNE'S RELIGIOUS POETRY

There are two notes in Donne's religious poems—the Catholic and the Anglican. The Progress of the Soul leans towards Catholicism and it records the doubts and longings of a troubled subtle soul. The following lines show the working of the mind and are full of bold and echoing vowel sounds:

O might those sights and tears return again
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent.
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourn with some fruit, as I have mourned in vain;
In mine Idolatory what showers of rain
Mine eyes did waste? What griefs my heart did vent?
That sufferance was my sin; now I repent.
Cause I 'did suffer I must suffer pain.

The Progress of the Soul, though written in 1601 was published after his death, in 1633. Ben Jonson called it "the conceit of Donne's transformation." Donne describes his theme in the very first stanza.

I sing the progress of a deathless soul
Whom Fate, which God made, but doth not control
Pla'd in most shapes; all lines before the low
Yok'd us, and when; and since, in this I sing.

He describes the soul of heresy which began in paradise (in the apple) and roamed through souls of Luther, Mahomed and Calvin and is now at rest in England:

The great soul which here among us now
Doth dwell, and moves that hand, and tongue and brow,
Which as the moon the sea moves us.

Donne moves from the aesthetic to the ethical plane of existence. His curiosity about the microcosm and his scepticism find expression here:

There's nothing simply good, nor all alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The only measure is, and judge, opinion.

The poem was written soon after the inner crisis and his conversion:

For though through many straits and lands I roam,
I launch at Paradise and I sail towards home.

The psychological problem finds its solution in a spiritual reintegration.

The Divine Poems include 'La Corona' and six holy sonnets on Annunciation, Nativity, Temple Crucifying, Ressurrection and Ascenstion. Donne seeks divine grace to crown his efforts:

But do not with a vile crown of frail bays,
Reward my muses white sincerity,
But what thy thorny crown gain'd, that gives me
A crown of glory, which doth flower always.

The other, group of sonnets also entitled Holy Sonnets contains 19 sacred poems. They belong to the period of doubt and intense inner struggle which preceded Donne's entry into the Church of England. Here is a mood of melancholy and despair.

This is my play's last scene here heavens appoint.
My pilgrimage's last mile. (Sonnet VI)
Despair behind and death before doth caste
Such terror and my feeble flesh doth waste.

In sonnet II, Christ appears as a lover and Donne as a temple usurped by the Devil.

Myself a temple of thy spirit divine

Why doth the devil then usurp on me...

In Sonnet III, Donne is sincerely repentant for his past sins:

That I might in this holy discontent
Mourn with some fruit, as I have moum'd in vain....
No ease, for long, yet vehement grief hath been
The effect and cause, the punishment and sin.

In Sonnet IV, Donne compares himself to a felon charged with treason, and yet he cannot resist conceits.

Christ's blood, though red, will whiten the souls stained and polluted with sin.
Oh make thyself with holy mourning black
And red with blushing, as them an with sin;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red souls to white.

Sonnet V shows Donne's Renaissance-spirit–his wander-lust:

You which beyond that heaven which was most high
Have found new spheres, and of new lands, can write,
Power new seas in ruined eyes, that so I might
Drown my world with my weeping earnestly.

Donne prays sincerely for pardon for his misdeeds:

Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.
The pilgrim-soul is not afraid of death.
Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.

In Sonnet XIII, Donne brings forward the argument that because beautiful women have liked him in his youth, so Christ, the Incarnation of Beauty, should be kind to him:

No, no; but as in my idolatry,
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
A sign of rigour: so 1 say to thee.

In Sonnet XVII, Donne refers to the death of his wife which has now made him turn his attention to spiritual attainment:

Since she whom I lov'd hath paid her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead.

In Sonnet XVIII, Donne expresses his desire to see the true church (England, Rome, Geneva) undivided, because it is indivisible. The bride of Christ is the mistress of the whole world.

Who is most true, and pleasing to thee then

When she is embrac'd and open to most men.

The Hymn to God, written during his serious illness in 1623, is a sincere prayer to God to receive him in His grace:

So, in his purple wrapp'd receive me Lord,
By these his thorns give me his other Crown,
And as to others' souls I preach'd thy word
Be this my Text my sermon to mine own,
Therefore that he may arise the lord throws down.

The Divine Poems contain a vivid and moving record of a brilliant mind struggling towards God. Truth, is the goal but there are hurdles and temptations in the way. Donne is not afraid of analysing the appalling difficulties of faith. The vacillations, the doubts, of this imperfect but sincere man are reflected in all their passion. Donne's aim is not didactic or moral; he wishes to lay bare his own moods, his aspirations, his sins, his humiliation in the quest of God. He is the most sincere and introspective Anglican poet of the seventeenth century. He had experienced the intensification of religious feeling mentioned in the holy sonnets. Walton writes: "His aspect was cheerful and such as gave a silent testimony of a clear knowing soul, of a conscience at peace with itself. His melting eye showed that he had a soft heart full of noble compassion, of too brave a soul

to offer injuries and too much a Christian not to pardon them in others." W.B. Yeats, a mystic poet, writes of Donne, "his pedantries and his obscenities, the rock and loam of his Eden, but make us the more certain that one who is but a man like us all has seen God!"

Conclusion: - Some critics question use of the metaphysical method in holy sonnets and religious poems. Grierson, however, justifies use of the metaphysical method in these serious poems. He writes: "Here, he recaptures the peculiar charm of his early love verse their best, the unique blend of passionate feelings and rapid subtle thinking, the strange sense that his verse gives of a certain conflict between the passionate thought and the varied and often elaborate pattern into which he moulds its expression, resulting in a strange blend of harshness and constraint with reverberating and penetrating harmony. No poems give more…the sense of conflict of soul, of faith and hope snatched and held desperately…."

Donne's religious poetry cannot be called mystical poetry. Donne does not forget his self as the mystics do. His is always conscious of his environment, of the world in which he lives and of his passionate friendships. As such his religious poetry lacks the transparent ecstacy found in great religious poetry. Helen White writes in this connection: "There was something in Donne's imagination that drove it out in those magnificent figures that sweep earth and sky, but whatever emotion such passages arouse in us, Donne was not the man to lose himself. In another world beyond the release of death, he hoped to see his God face to face, and without end. But he was not disposed to anticipate the privileges of that world in this, nor even in general try to do so… The result is that in most of the mystical passages in both his poetry and his prose, the marvellous thrust into the ineffable is followed by a quick pull-back into the world of there-and-now with its lucid sense-detail and its ineluctable common sense."

Donne's holy sonnets are deservedly famous and are remarkable. They embody his deeply felt emotions in a language reflecting conscious craftsmanship.

The Wit of John Donne

What is wit: - It is difficult to give a satisfactory definition of wit. The dictionary definition mentions a keen perception and cleverly apt expression of amusing words or ideas or of those connections between ideas which awaken amusement and pleasure. Wit is revealed in the unusual or ingenious use of words rather than in the subject-matter.

Inferior wit lies in the use of paradox, pun, oxymoron and word-play. Higher wit is the discovery of conceits and the assembly and synthesis of ideas which appear dissimilar or incongruous.

> **In a true piece of wit, all things must be**
> **Yet all these things agree**
> **As in the Ark join'd without force or strife**
> **All creatures dwelt, all creatures that had life** (Cowley)

Donne is remarkable as much for his metaphysical element as for his wit. Hartley Coleridge, however, pokes fun at Donne's wit:

> **Twist iron pokers into true love knots**
> **Coining hard words not found in polyglots.**

Peculiar wit: - Donne has been called "the monarch of wit'. Dryden wrote: "If we are not so great wits as Donne, we are certainly better poets." Pope echoed the same thought: "Donne had no imagination, but as much wit, I think, as any writer can possibly

have." Dr. Johnson felt that Donne's wit lay in the discovery of hidden resemblances in dissimilar things.

Donne's wit is deliberate and peculiar. It impresses us with its intellectual vigour and force and does not merely lie in the dexterous or ingenious use of words. Secondly, it comes naturally from the author's expansive knowledge and deep scholarship. According to Leishman, Donne's wit lies in his imprudent and shocking language. T.S. Eliot, however, finds his wit in the fusion of opposites—the blend of thought and feeling, what he calls 'sensuous apprehension of thought'.

The wit of Donne stands in a class by itself. Though his wit has points in common with Caroline poets, it has certain points which are peculiarly its own. Moreover, there is a world of difference between the wit of Shakespeare and Pope and the wit of the metaphysical poets. T.S. Eliot remarks: "The wit of the Caroline poets is not the wit of Shakespeare, and it is not the wit of Dryden, the great master of contempt, or of Pope, the great master of disgust." In Elizabethan poets, wit is decorative and ornamental. It is a result of light-hearted fancy or strange setting. In Donne, wit is the result of weighty thought and brooding imagination. It is a living image, and a subtle conceit, coloured with the quality of his thought:

I saw Eternity on the other night.

Donne's wit is grave and full of significance and sometimes pregnant with strange ideas.

Its complexity: - Donne's wit is a compound of many similes extracted from many objects and sources. His wit has certain distinct qualities. Donne's wit is scholastic or dialectical rather than metaphysical. He is fond of a logical sequence, ingenious and far-fetched analysis. In his poem entitled, The Anagram, Donne by a series of dialectical paradoxes defends the preposterous proposition that an old and ugly woman will make a better wife than a young and handsome one.

Similarly Donne defends his apparent gaiety during the absence of his beloved in his own paradoxical manner:

That Love's a bitter sweet, I never conceive
Till the sour minute comes of taking leave
Another I taste it. But as men drink up
In haste the bottom of a next civned cup
And take some syrup after, so do I.
To put all relish from my memory
Of parting, drown it in the hope to meet
Shortly, again and make our absence sweet.

Variety of moods: -Donne's wit expresses all moods from the gay to the serious, and from the happy to the pessimistic. Sometimes he is flippant and irreverent. In the Flea, he deifies a flea and calls it a marriage temple. In many poems, the poet debunks the customary vows of lovers and the Petrarchan conventions. Sometimes there is self-mockery and the poet plunges from the sublime to the ludicrous. The variety of poems on love like Love's War, Love's Diet, Love's Exchange, Love's Usury, and Love's Alchemy shows the range of his passion and wit.

Mental vigour: - The secret of Donne's wit lies in its mental strength and intellectual power. It is an expression of his rational outlook on life, an embodiment of his poetic sensibility, and a reflection of his vision of life. One critic observes in this connection that it is "the outward projection of his sense of the many-sidedness of things, of his manifold possibility, and ultimately a recognition of the multiplicity of experience." Donne could afford to laugh at established practices and convictions because he disliked humbug and pretence. A critic remarks: "What one sees all the time are established certainties being

crumbled, positive pretensions denied or mocked, the very affirmations of the poem doubted or discredited before it ends, and a few certitudes won by hard proof in the face of contingent circumstance".

Irony: - The secret of Donne's wit lies in his use of irony. Irony is a literary device by which words express a meaning that is often the direct opposite of the intended meaning. In this manner, the poet by implication comments on the situation. Donne's irony is noticed in his attitude to love which can, to an extent, be summed up in the phrase: "What fools these mortals be!" The indignation and mockery takes on a literary phraseology and the intention of the poet is obvious. A.J. Smith writes in this connection: "The outright mockery of people and sects, and the impugning of motives in general, certainly isn't cynical. It expresses a perspective which takes the world's activities as ludicrous feverishncss in respect of bedrock human certainties; not however occasion for despair but, diverting by their own zestful life. The overturning of accepted evaluations seems the more convincing because it is the reverse of solemn: and because it emphatically doesn't imply any rejection of experience, but rather a delight in it."

Comparisons: - Donne's analogies are apt and full-blooded. In Love's War,Donne compares the qualities of a good lover and a good soldier; as for instance, the capacity to keep awake for nights together, the courage to face an enemy (rival) boldly, to besiege and take by storm, to elude watchmen and sentries. Donne's analogies are compressed syllogisms. Just look at this syllogism:

All that is lovable is wonderful
The mistress is wonderful,
Therefore the mistress is lovable.

Donne compresses the above argument in the following two lines:

All love is wonder; if we justly do
Account her wonderful, why not lovely too?
At times, Donne's wit takes the form of epigram:
If things of sight such Heaven be
What Heavens are those we cannot see.

Donne makes a sort of pattern of thought, of a mind moving from the contemplation of a fact to a deduction from a fact, and thence to a conclusion. Oliver Elton notes the endless 'teasing of words and thoughts'. Prof. Croft observes: "Thus the brain-sick fancies are piled up, twaddle upon twaddle, until the whole thing explodes with a passionate contrary or a familiar image." The notable thing about his comparisons is their novelty and freshness, their references to unlikely things and places. For example, the poet compares the two lovers to the Phoenix and to both the eagle and the dove. The lovers will be ressurected after death like the Phoenix. Joan Bennett observes: "They evoke severe sense memories of a literary heritage. If they evoke memories, they are of large draughts of intellectual drink, imbibed from science rather than poetry. "Donne is in the habit of elaborating a figure to the furthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it.

Exaggeration: - Exaggeration is an important element in Donne's wit. This exaggeration appears to be outrageous in its high spiritedness:

Go and catch a falling star
Get with child a mandrake root....

Donne being an anti-traditionalist, is keen on shocking people. His wit takes a kind of moral holiday by flouting traditional ideals and morals in several relationships. Dr. Johnson takes exception to Donne's wit on two grounds, aesthetic and moral. Dr. Johnson is offended by its lack of proportion and decorum, its "fundamental unseriousness, its detachment, and its immorality"

To teach thee, I am naked first, why then
What needst thou have more covering than a man

Dr. Johnson applies Pope's definition to the works of Donne:" That which had been often thought, but was never before so well expressed". Donne does not conform to this concept of wit. According to Dr. Johnson, wit is both conventional and new, but the wit of Donne is a combination of dissimilar images, a discovery of the occult resemblances in things unlike. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together, nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons and allusions; their learning instructs and their subtlety surprises, but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought and though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased. If they frequently threw their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck at unexpected truth; if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage.

Paradox: - Dr. Johnson compares Donne's paradoxes to remarks made by epicurean deities on the actions of men, devoid of interest or emotion. T.S. Eliot is also struck by the "telescoping of images and multiplied associations, constantly amalgamating disparate experiences always forming new wholes out of matter so diverse as reading of Spinoza, falling in love and smelling the dinner cooking". In one of his satires, Donne emphasises his companion's inconsistency and absurdity in hating naked virtue, although he loves his naked whore. Leishman dwells on the outrageous hyperbole and perversity of Donne's wit—"wit, often deliberately outrageous and impudent and coat-trailing, often breath-takingly ingenious in the discovery of comparisons and analogies, but nearly always, in one way or another, argumentative, sagacious, rigid, scholastically argumentative, whether in the defence of preposterous paradoxes or in the mock-serious devising of hyperbolical compliments."

She is all States and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Countries, Towns, Camps, beg of from above
A pattern of your love.

What can be more dramatic and hypothetical than:

I wonder, by my troth what thou and I
Did, till we lov'd?

When the lover is dead on account of disappointment in love, ghost of the lover will haunt and harass the beloved.

Donne is not merely witty but passionately witty or wittily passionate, in the two poems entitled The Anagram and The Bracelet. The words in themselves are not difficult, but the structure of sentences is far from simple.

Conclusion: - To some critics, Donne's wit is one of the means of escape, an escape from boredom and depression which constantly afflicted him during the years of his creative activity. Through wit and intellectual ingenuity, Donne avoids both self-pity and Hamlet-like frustration. Drummond rightly calls him "the best epigrammatist we have found in English".

In the ultimate reckoning, Donne's wit may be regarded not only symbolic of his spirit of interrogation and discovery but also the embodiment of introspection and intellectualism, the rebellion and conflict in the mind of Donne.

Donne's Contribution to English Style and Language

Donne has made a remarkable contribution to English poetic diction and versification. In this respect his status is like that of Dryden, Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot. We understand

that the English language became too poetic in the age of Wordsworth, and in that of T.S. Eliot. It lost its touch with the language of everyday life, with the result that it became weak and enervated. Donne endeavoured to re-vitalise and invigorate English language by making it flexible. He imparted to it sinewy strength, energy and vigour.

Donne's poetry is based on an individual technique. His poetic diction and style is unconventional. The 'Donne-poem' is an argument in which a mind living in analogy exploits a chosen situation with a new and elaborate set of inter-connected images. His poems are like voyages of discovery, exploring new worlds of life, love and spirits. They are voyages of the mind which

> **Cerates, transcending these, and other seas.**

Matter more important than words

To Donne, matter was more important than words and the management of the thoughts dictated the form of the poem. De Quincey thought that Donne laid principal stress on the management of thought and secondly on the ornaments of style. Here is a poet who argues in verse accompanied by music. As T.S. Eliot puts it, "A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility."

His love-poems are explorations of the types of love and friendship, from the man's point of view. They are not so obviously "poetic", as those of Marvell and Herrick. Excess of intellectual satires and complexity prevent the luminosity and certainty of statement. This partly accounts for his occasional inequality, violence and obscurity. His style stands in a class by itself. Cazamian writes: "Donne will have nothing to do with the easy and familiar, the mythological imagery. At the risk of being enigmatic, he takes pleasure only in the subtle. Passion, feeling, sensuousness—all are subjected to wit. This play of wit sometimes results in astounding hyperbole; sometimes he ingeniously brings together ideas as remote from each other as the antipodes, mingling the lofty and the mean, the sublime and the trivial. He often prefers to a smoothly flowering line, the lines that are freely divided, and in which he accents have an effect of shock, and pull the reader up and awaken his attention".

Donne's world of ideas: - The basis of the 'Donne-poem' is neither music nor imagery but the idea. There is a basic idea underlying each poem. The idea may be real or fantastic but it is never artificial or affected. Donne is modern in his psychological realism; he believed in the realism of a world of ideas. Donne told his friends that he described "the idea of a woman and not as she was." He rejected the courtly idea of woman as an angel or a goddess. To him, woman was essentially fickle and inconstant in love. The song beginning, "Go and catch a falling star" is based on the faithlessness of women in love. Nowhere can you find a woman who is faithful to her lover—"Fraility, thy name is woman." His important poem—The Anniversary—is a record of domestic bliss. The love of Donne and his wife is eternal and immortal and is not subject to decay or death:

> **All other things, to their destruction draw,**
> **Only our love hath no decay;**
> **This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday....**

His poem—The Sun Rising—is a stern warning to the sun not to disturb the lovers in their bed-chamber. The proper duty of the sun is to call on schoolboys, apprentices and courtiers who must attend to their work in time. His song—"Sweetest Love"—is based on the idea that parting is no doubt sad and painful, but those who love each other sincerely and deeply can never be really parted. This poem was addressed by Donne to his wife when he wanted to go to foreign countries for about six months. He bids her farewell cheerfully, till he meets her again.

Both structural and decorative peculiarities of Donne's poems: -The 'Donne-poem' possesses both structural and decorative peculiarities. Firstly, the metre is not a matter of chance but of choice. The metre is a part and parcel of the fused whole; it is not an ornament super-added. S.T. Coleridge writes: "To read Dryden and Pope, you need only count syllables; but to read Donne you must measure Time and discover Time of each word by the sense of Passion." You must hear his silences and his eloquence. Examine the following lines of the poem The Relic:

When my grave is broke up again
Some second ghost to entertain,
(For graves have learned that woman-head
To be more than one a bed)
And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone
Will not he let us alone,
And think that there a loving couple lies,
Who thought that this device might be some way,
To make their souls, at the last busy day,
Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?

Donne's interest in music: - Moreover, the greatest metrical variety in the form of syllables and stanzas shows not only the fertility of his genius but also his interest in and ear for music, Let us analyse The Relic and study its metrical effects. The Relic, a love poem, contains three stanzas. Let us read loudly the first stanza to grasp the movement. Each stanza contains eleven lines, of which the first four are octosyllabic or four-footed lines, the fifth and seventh are three footed, and the remainder of the length are—of the blank. verse line i.e. decasyllabic. "In reading the first stanza aloud, one sees that the first two lines, regular and equal, broach the theme with a typical Donnian startlingness and boldness, lines three and four have the same length as one and two but their being enclosed in brackets and the dig at woman's inconstancy which they offer, the meaning is, graves have learnt the feminine trick of being a bed to more than one person; old graves were often dug up to make room for new tenants."

Donne's use of simple and colloquial language: - Dryden appreciated Donne for fusing and combining complexity of substance with simplicity of expression. According to Legouis, he did not feel any necessity of mentioning gods and goddesses in his poetry. He rejected all the conventional and traditional poetic devices. He used the different vocabulary and imagery which was quite popular among the masses of his time. In his time, medieval scholastic learning and science was quite popular, although it appears very dull and boring to the modem reader. Donne used all the current phrases and diction of his age. He even expresses complex emotions by means of simple and colloquial diction and phraseology. Thus, he revolted against the Petrarchan, Spenserian and pastoral poetry. The poet expressed "Petrarchan sighs in Petrarchan language". The language, diction and imagery of poets had become too poetic, hackneyed and stereotyped. The conceits and images, metaphors and similes bear resemblance to one poet or another. Donne's constitution is considered remarkable because of infusing into English language energy and sinewy strength. Due to the invigorating influence of his poetic diction, his language brought new lustre to English literature.

Harmony of English verse: - Donne tries to lend metrical pattern to the rhetoric of utterance. Yet his verse has no note of jarring disharmony; on the contrary, it has a haunting harmony of its own. He is successful in finding the rhythm that will express his passionate argument, and his mood: that is why his verses are as startling as his phrasing.

Donne master of poetic rhetoric: - What Jonson called the 'wrenching of accent' in Donne, can be amply justified. He plays with rhythm as he plays with conceits and phrases. Fletcher Melton has analysed his verse to show two metrical effects, the "troubling of the regular fall of verse-stress by the intrusion of rhetorical stress on syllables which the metrical pattern leaves unstressed, and secondly, an echoing and re-echoing of similar sounds parallel to his fondness for resemblances in thoughts and things." He apparently uses an individual poetic diction, in the same way, he chooses metrical effects which are new and original. Prof. Grierson writes: "Donne is perhaps our first great master of poetic rhetoric, of poetry used, as Dryden and Pope were to use it, for effects of oratory rather than of song, and the advance which Dryden achieved was secured by subordinating to oratory the more passionate and imaginative qualities which troubled the balance and movement of Donne's packed out imaginative rhetoric."

Bold, original and startling use of figures of speech: - The other important feature of his poetry is the bold, original and startling use of figures of speech. Comparisons are useful in communicating sensations, feelings and states of mind. Donne relies on his scholasticism for new and far-fetched comparisons, and yet they are real, credible and meaningful. Donne, in Love's Progress,draws on geography and science of navigation in praising his mistress. The simile refers to the beloved's eyes as sun, and the nose as the meridian.

> **The nose (like to the first meridian runs)**
> **Not 'twixt an East and West but 'twixt two suns**

The tears of lovers are always of great poetic account but Donne handles them in different ways. In A Valediction of Weeping, he calls his tears coins; they bear her stamp because they reflect her image; the tear acts as a mirror. Then be compares the tear to a blank globe before a cartographer. In Witchcraft by a Picture, the poet's eye is reflected in his beloved's eye. As his tears fall, her image also falls and so her love. In another poem, Donne compares a good man to a telescope because just as a telescope enables us to see distant things nearer and clearer, in the same way a good man exemplifies virtue in his life in a practical manner. A highly developed simile is found in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning written on the poet's temporary separation from his wife. The leave-taking should be quiet and peaceful as the dying of virtuous men. During absence, the lovers' two souls are not separated but undergo,

> **An expansion**
> **Like gold to airy thinness beat.**

Then the poet remarks that the two souls are like the two legs of a compasses:

> **If they be two, are two so**
> **As stiff twin compasses are two;**
> **Thy soul the fix'd foot makes no show**
> **To move but doth if th' other do.**

The wife's soul is the fixed foot of the compass, the foot with the pin that remains in the centre of the circle. It moves only when the other foot—the husband's soul—moves and then only by leaning in the direction of the return to the centre—symbolically—the journey to Europe and return—are accomplished because the other foot—the wife's soul—remains fixed. The journey is realised in terms of the completion of the circle.

Contribution of conceits to English versification style: - Donne's conceits are peculiar and novel. A conceit means a strained or far-fetched comparison or literary figure. The Elizabethan conceits were decorative and ornamental, while metaphysical conceits were the products of the intellectual process of thinking in figures. Donne's poems abound in conceits. Here are a few examples:

The spider lover, which unsubstantiates all
And can convert manna to gall,
Love, all alike, no reason knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
If, as in water stir'd more circles be
Produc'd by one love such additions take,
Those like so many spheres but one heaven make
For they are all concentric unto thee

For Donne, the flea who has sucked their blood is the blessed go-between who has united the lovers.

This flea is you and I and this
Our marriage bed and marriage temple is

In Twicknam Garden, Donne desires to measure the love of other lovers by the taste of his own tears:

Hither with crystal vials, lovers come,
And take my tears which are love's wine
And try your mistress tears at home
For all are false that taste not just like mine.

Donne combines two figures of speech in The Sun Rising; here is apostrophe coupled with personification:

Busy old fool unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus
Through windows and through curtains, call on us?

Here is a hyperbole in Song to describe the speed of a lover's journey:

Yestemight the sun went hence,
And yet is here today,
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way;
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

Donne's irony: - Donne is fond of irony. A faithful woman will be false even while you inform others of her virtue:

Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two or there.

In Woman's Constancy, Donne shifts irony from the beloved to himself:

Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day
Tomorrow when thou leav'st what will thou say?
Will thou then antedate soon new made vow?
Or say that now.
We are not just those persons which we were?
For by tomorrow I may think so too.

The poet is afraid that the beloved will break off their relationship in one way or another. He changes his own idea, and thinks that even if she does nothing, he himself may end their relationship. Donne does not spare himself when he engages in pun.

In A Hymn to God the Father, he writes, "When thou hast done, thou has not done, For, I have more."

Donne is fond of paradox. Here is one from A Burnt Ship with all its grim humour:

> **Out of a fired ship which by no way rescued**
> **But drowning could be rescued from the flame**
> **Some men leap'd forth and even as they came**
> **Near the foe's ships did by their shot decay**
> **So all were lost which in the ship were found,**
> **They in the sea being burnt they in the burnt ship drowned.**

The abundant use of poetic devices and metres shows that Donne is intellectual to the finger-tip. He plays not only with words but also with ideas. His mind is full of medieval theology, science, mathematics and jurisprudence. His imagination is as complex as his intellect. His ingenuity finds expression in hyperbole, wit and conceit. His poetry may not be harmonious or musical at times, but we cannot deny that it always poses both sincerity and strength—elements necessary for greatness in poetry. The strength of Donne lies in his being an inimitable poet, one whom it is very difficult to emulate. Donne in the Holy Sonets writes: "Show me dear Christ, thy spouse so bright and clear." The Church is certainly the bride but she is open to most men which is hardly complimentary to any married woman. Here he is both paradoxical and ironical.

Donne's use of Diction in a Peculiar Manner: - Simple words are used in unexpected way. Although diction is simple, yet simple words are combined in unexpected ways and thus strange compounds are formed. For example:

(i) A she-sigh from my mistress' heart….
(ii) No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;…

Donne, sometimes, uses puns which are simple but effective; for example son/sun; done/Donne. Thus his use of words is often subtle and suggestive. He suggests much more than he narrates or describes.

Tone generally colloquial and flexible: - Love-songs are highly admired because of the general tone of the language which are usually colloquial. They have liveliness of spoken language and thus they are flexible. The first lines are often colloquial in tone. They immediately startle the readers and capture their attention. For example, note the opening of The Canonization.

Donne's symbols are intellectual: - Helen Gardner commends the verbal craftsmanship of Donne which has an attraction and magic of its own. It arouses memories and associations in the minds of the readers. Such associations have an intellectual, not an emotional content. Though Donne deals with love, yet he borrows ideas from geometry and hydraulics to explain a gamut of emotions. In this connection, Helen Gardner writes: "Donne's words bring with them the memory of abstract ideas. The magical lines in his poetry are those which evoke such conceptions as those of space, time, nothingness, and eternity. The words which strike the keynote of a poem are circles, spheres, concentrique, etc. They are the symbols of that infinity in love which underlies the human ebb and flow. The circle occurs again and again in Donne's verse and in his prose as the symbol of infinity, insensibility to such intellectual symbolism has caused not only Dr. Johnson but even so modern a critic as Miss Sackville-West to cite the compass image in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, as an example of metaphysical inaptitude."

Variety of versification: - Donne is a great experimenter in verse. He uses a large number of metres and different types of forms. However, he sees to it that his versification suits the subject matter and is in harmony with the ideas expressed in the poems. In this connection, Redpath remarks: "Some of the stanza forms are very attractive in themselves. Much play is made with variations of lines length. Stanzas of

more than six lines seem to give Donne the scope he so often needs to develop the complex interplay of thought and feeling which is so typical of him. With exceptions, the poems in shorter stanzas tend to be thin or slight."

In the song, Go and Catch a Falling Star, the short lines offer a contrast to the long line at the tail of each stanza. Similarly, the change of line length in A Valediction: of Weeping, echoes the turbulent passion expressed in the poem.

Donne's ruggedness: - His ruggedness has been condemned by Ben Jonson who said that for not keeping of accent, Donne deserved hanging. It is true that Donne disregarded the simple rhythms of Elizabethan Age and introduced complicated rhythm patterns in order to convey the intellectual gymnastic and metaphysical conceits. One critic observes that every twist and turn of the sound pattern corresponds with the twist and turn of thought process. In the satire specially, his language is harsh and coarse. In this connection, Grierson remarks: "If there is one thing more distinctive than another of Donne's best work it is the closeness with which the verse echoes the sense and soul of the poem. And so it is in the satires. Their abrupt and harsh verse reflects the spirit in which they are written. Horace, quite as much as Persius, is Donne's teacher in satire and it is Horace he believes himself to be following in adopting a verse in harmony with the unpoetic temper of his work."

Grierson points out: "Donne was no conscious reviver of Dante's mataphysics, but to the game of elaborating fantastic conceits and hyperboles which was the fashion throughout Europe, he brought not only a full-blooded temperament and acute mind, but a vast and growing store of the same scholastic learning, the same Catholic theology, as controlled Dante's thoughts, but jostling already with the new learning of Copernicus and Paracleus."

"His vivid, simple, and realistic touches are too quickly merged in, learned and fantastic elaborations and the final effect of almost every poem of Donne's is bizarre, if it be the expression of a strangely blended temperament, an intense emotion, a vivid imagination."

Donne is bizarre and wayward in his style. He is "a maker of conceits for their own sake, a grafter of tasteless and irrelevant ornaments upon the body of his thought There are poems which undoubtedly support these accusations, and I shall be the last to deny that Donne relished the play of "wit' for its own sake; but I am convinced that in general his style is admirably fitted to express his own thought and temperament, and in all probability grew out of the need of such expression. The element of dissonance is no exception. No doubt, it expresses his spirit of revolt against poetic custom…..in this case the poetic ideal of harmony. But the expression of revolt is only a superficial function. With its union of disparate suggestions dissonance is most serviceable instrument, in fact a prime necessity of expressing Donne's multiple sensibility, his complex modes, and the discords of his temperament. In short, the dissonance; of style reflects a dissonance inwardly experienced."

"What is true", writes Grierson, "of Donne's imagery is true of the other disconcerting element in his poetry, its harsh and rugged verse. It, is an outcome of the same double motive, the desire to startle and the desire to approximate poetic to direct, and unconventional colloquial speech."

"Donne's verse has a powerful harmony of its own, for he is striving to find a rhythm that will express the passionate fulness of his mind, the fluxes and refluxes of his moods, and the felicities of his verse are as frequent and startling as those of his phrasing. He is one of the first, perhaps the first, writers, of the elaborate stanza or paragraph in which

the discords of individual lines or phrases are resolved in the complex and rhetorically effective harmony of the whole group of lines…."

"Donne secures two effects; firstly the trebling of the regular fall of the verse stresses by the introduction of rhetorical stresses on syllables which the metrical pattern leaves unstressed; and secondly, an echoing and re-echoing of similar sounds parallel to his fondness for resemblances in thoughts and things apparently the most remote from one another."

"He writes as one who will say what he has to say with regard to conventions of poetic diction or smooth verse; but what he has to say is subtle and surprising and so are the metrical effects with which it is presented…It was not indeed in lyrical verse that Dryden followed and developed Donne, but in his eulogistic satirical and epistolary poems."

Donne's dramatic flexibility, rhetorical touches and poetic rhythms: - Donne is quite dramatic in offering catchy opening lines. He almost catches the reader by his arms and give him a jolt. This dramatic rhythm gives the illusion of talk in a state of excitement. Donne is original in his innovation of poetic rhythm. As Legouis asserts: "John Donne is perhaps the most singular of English poets. His verses offer examples of everything castigated by classical writers as bad taste and eccentricity, all pushed to such an extreme that the critic's head swims as he condemns…At the outset of Donne's career, Spenser had already won his glory, and the Petrarchan sonneteers were producing collection upon collection. The independent young poet reacted against these schools. He despised highly regular metres and monotonous and harmonious cadences. He violated the rhythm in his Satires, Songs and Sonets and in hisElegies. His friend and admirer Ben Jonson said of him that he esteemed him 'the first poet in the world for some things' but also that, 'Donne, for not keeping of accent deserved hanging'. Closely examined, this crime, for such it is, derives from his subordination of melody to meaning, his refusal to submit to the reigning hierarchy of words, sometimes from his lapses into the expressive spoken tongue, in defiance of the convention of poetic rhythm."

Helen Gardner further remarks: "Donne deliberately deprived himself of the hypnotic power with which a regularly recurring beat plays upon the nerves. He needed rhythm for another purpose; his rhythms arrest and goad the reader, never quite fulfilling his expectations but forcing him to pause here and to rush on there, governing pace and emphasis so as to bring out the full force of the meaning. Traditional imagery and traditional rhythms are associated with traditional attitudes; but Donne wanted to express the complexity of his own moods, rude or subtle, harmonious or discordant. He had to find a more personal imagery and a more flexible rhythm. He made demands on his reader that no lyric poet had hitherto made."

Conclusion: - The memorable nature of Donne's verses will strike any casual reader. Such verses haunt our memory and return to us again and again. Grierson has beautifully summed up the salient characteristics of John Donne's style and versification. As he remarks: "Donne's verse has a powerful and haunting harmony of its own. For Donne is not simply, no poet could be, willing to force his accent, to strain and crack a prescribed pattern; he is striving to find a rhythm that will express the passionate fulness of his mind, the fluxes and refluxes of his moods; and the felicities of verse are as frequent and startling as those of phrasing. He is one of the first masters, perhaps the first, of the elaborate stanza or paragraph in which the discords of individual lines or phrases are resolved in the complex and rhetorically effective harmony of the whole group of lines…The wrenching of accent which Jonson complained of is not entirely due to carelessness or indifference. It has often both a rhetorical and a harmonious justification. Donne plays with rhythmical effects as with conceits and words and often in

much the same way…There is, that is to say, in his verse the same blend as in his diction of the colloquial and the bizarre. He writes as one who will say what he has to say without regard to conventions of poetic diction or smooth verse, but what he has to say is subtle and surprising, and so are the metrical effects with which it is presented. There is nothing of unconscious or merely careless harshness in his poetry. Donne is perhaps our first great master of poetic rhetoric, of poetry used, as Dryden and Pope were to use it, for effects of oratory rather than of song, and the advance which Dryden achieved was secured by subordinating to oratory the more passionate and imaginative qualities which troubled the balance and movement of Donne's packed, but imaginative rhetoric."

BATTER MY HEART, THREE-PERSONED GOD

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

As the very title of the sonnet suggests, it is a passionate and forceful appeal to God to take possession of the poet's heart. The intensity of the poet's feeling is conveyed by the word 'batter'. To batter means to pound repeatedly, to deal heavy repeated blows, to beat persistently and hard.

The poet vehemently prays to the Christian Trinity—God the Father, God the Son (Christ) and God the Holy Ghost to take possession of his heart by force. According to Leishman, it reveals the poet's "agonised striving" to be possessed by God and gives expression to it through the analogy of an usurped town during war and then of a beloved under the forcible possession of the adversary of the lover. "Any mild and persuasive action will not help in the transformation of the poet. The poet is a confirmed sinner and only drastic action against him will change him. A total regeneration is not possible without a powerful and violent action of God." According to F.W. Payne, the sonnet expresses adequately "in its striking metaphor and its forceful diction, his burning desire for an assurance of forgiveness" R.G. Cox feels that in the 'Holy Sonnets' of which this poem is one, the method of expression and style is the same as that of love poems. "As in love poetry here too, is a considerable variety of tone and method ranging from mere casuistry and debating tricks to a profound urgency and conviction and sometimes both may be found together." In this sonnet, the poet treats God as a conqueror or a ravisher. This is rather an unusual comparison. The plea of the poet is that unless God acts with force and vigour, He will not mend his ways. The way down-hill is quick and easy, the way uphill is difficult and strenuous. Only God's might may push him up on the spiritual path.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The poet appeals to God to transform his inner being. As he is a great sinner, mild methods will not succeed with him. God the Tinker, need not use gentle methods like 'knock, breathe, shine and seek to amend'. He must use harsh and rough methods. Just as the tinker, in order to reshape the pot, must 'break, blow and burn' the metal to give it a new shape, in the same way God must overpower him and use violent methods to reshape and remould him.

Usurped town: - The poet compares himself to a usurped town. His soul belongs to God, but has been taken away by the Devil. He himself is willing to pay his homage to God, but he cannot do so because he is under the power of the Devil. Reason is God's Viceroy, but even Reason is unable to oppose the might of the Devil. Therefore, God should use force and release him from the horrible clutches of evil forces. Thus alone he can be saved from damnation.

Usurped beloved: - The poet clarifies his position through the metaphor of lover-beloved relationship. The poet is the beloved while God is the lover. According to tradition, God is the man, while human beings are all females. The poet's soul loves God and desires to be united with Him. However, she has been forcibly betrothed to the Devil. He is a slave of the Devil and God alone can rescue him. God should sever his connection with evil and redeem him from wickedness. God should accept him as a beloved and take him into His arms. Now he is a slave of the Devil but let God make a slave of him. The poet feels that he can never be purified till God consummates his union with him. Then alone he will be free from sin and evil.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

This use of sensual relationship for holy transformation need not be objected to: 'Imprison me, enthrall me, ravish me' only show the intensity of the poet's feeling who wishes to be totally owned and possessed by God. There is a great use of paradox in the poem. Donne's relation with God is expressed through several paradoxes. Donne can only rise if he is once thrown by God; he can be free only if he is imprisoned by God and he can be chaste only if he is ravished by the Almighty. Another paradox is based on the maxim: preparedness for war is the best guarantee of peace. The poet can gain peace of mind only when God uses violence and snatches him away from the Devil. The tinker must use harsh and violent methods to break the vessel and then reshape it. Similarly, God should burn the impurities in him through the fire of the bellows. The metaphor of the usurped town to be taken by the lawful owner is quite appropriate. Similarly, the usurped body who is in the possession of the Devil should be rescued by God. Freedom and purity can come only through divine consummation.

The idea of violence runs throughout the poem like an undercurrent. The hammering of the tinker or the blacksmith is followed by the siege and capture of the besieged town. The marriage is followed by ravishment. There is a continuous comparison of secular love to divine love. Donne's artistry is evident in his expression of physical love which is used to advantage in portraying holy love. The use of sensual imagery cannot be regarded as incongruous because in the final analysis, it conveys the sincerity and confessional frankness of the poet as a true slave of God.

DEATH BE NOT PROUD

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The poem is included as Sonnet X in the volume of Holy Sonnets: Divine Meditations. Donne demolishes two popular concepts: firstly death is dreadful and secondly death is mighty. He personifies Death and addresses him directly. Death has a certain power over man and it gives temporary sleep. If death and sleep are like brothers, greater rest and relaxation must come from death.

Death releases the soul from the body's prison. Opium and narcotics can induce sleep like death. Why then should death boast of its great power? The poet therefore calls it "poor death". Moreover, man does not die; his soul lives forever; it is, therefore, death which becomes superfluous and meaningless. The victory of Christian resurrection over death is the last nail in the coffin of death. The poem proves the thesis that death is neither terrible nor powerful.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The poet argues that death is not dreadful because those whom death claims to have killed have a long and peaceful sleep. Sleep resembles death, but just as sleep resembles and invigorates, similarly death would provide more comfort and pleasure. This is the reason for the virtuous dying young. Death brings rest and peace and therefore it is not dreadful.

Death: a slave: - Death is not powerful, as men think. It is not a powerful king but a miserable slave. It is an agent of fate, chance, and actions of wicked people, poison, wars and sickness. Death is a servant of sickness and old age. It induces sleep, but there are various other means like opium and drugs which give a better and gentler sleep. Death has no reason to be proud. It can only make people sleep for some time. After sleep in the grave, people shall wake up on the day of resurrection and live forever. Then death will have absolutely no power over human beings. Thus death's jurisdiction comes to an end. In fact, death does not kill human beings; it is death which itself dies.

The immortality of the soul ensures the survival of man. So, the poem ends on a paradox: Man is immortal; death is mortal.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Apart from the debating skill and the plausible argument of the poet, there is a lurking fear of death. The allusion to resurrection and immortality does not in any way reduce the fear of death. One is reminded of Bacon's words: "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark". The comparisons are common—death as sleep, death as opium, body as prison of the soul. This poem is similar to the sonnet entitled. At the round earth's imagined corners where Donne speaks of death's woe, and the triumph of souls over death on Doomsday. Here Donne emphasizes the impotence of Death.

The structure of the poem facilitates the division of the theme into two parts. The octet proves that death is neither dreadful nor mighty.-The sestet brings the argument to a personal level and regards death as a slave and a door through which the soul passes to immortality. The last line hits the nail on the head. It is not the poet who dies. The poet declares happily: "Death, thou shall die".

TWICKNAM GARDEN

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

"Twicknam Garden" is a sonorous (resonant; high-sounding) and thoughtful lyric. It was most probably addressed to the Countess Lucy of Bedford for whom Donne had a profound admiration. The lyric is distinguished by highly condensed feelings of sadness. The poet is obviously in a mood of dejection. He gives vent to the anguish of his heart which neither nature can soothe nor poetry. Only Donne's emotion is the subject of this lyric. There is a sort of sting in the tail or in the last two lines. Donne calls the fair sex as the perverted sex but excepting this no scornful or bitter comments are made on women.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

It is remarkable that the lady to whom the poem is addressed was never in love with Donne. The poet probably mistook her friendly regard for him for love. The poet feels irresistibly drawn toward this "one of the most accomplished and cultured ladies" of the seventeenth century. Her truth kills him, because he is deeply involved in her charm and personality.

The most distinguishing feature of the poem is the atmosphere of sombre desolation that pervades it. This cold, bleak and cheerless atmosphere is in perfect harmony with the anguish of the poet. The poem reminds us of Keats's La Belle Dame Sans Merci and Shelley's song, A Widow Bird Sat Mourning. We find the same bleakness, loneliness, and dry unrelenting aspect of a leaden skied winter. The poem is steeped in grim and overwhelming despair. The poet strikes a piercing note of sadness with the very first line.

Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears, the well defined and concrete images drive home the utter despair and incurable pain of a love-lorn heart. For example the cold hardness of a "stone fountain weeping out my tears" and "crystal phials" leave on the mind an unforgettable impression of poignant sorrow. The frigid expression of tears gives a unifying effect to the poem. The poet refers to tears in all the three stanzas. Tears, in fact, control the diversity of imagery that we find in the poem.

The poem contains some of most marvellous of Donne's "conceits". In the first stanza we have the startling conceit of "spider love":

The spider Love, which transubstantiates all,
And can convert manna to gall.

Again, we have an equally brilliant conceit when Donne compares sad and poignant memories of love to the serpent in the garden of Eden:

And that this place may thoroughly be thought,
True paradise, I have the serpent brought.

In the second stanza, the love-lorn poet yearns to be converted into the stone fountain which would be shedding tears throughout the year. In the last stanza, 'tears' are called "Love's wine". All these 'conceits' lend a peculiar charm to the lyric.

"Twicknam Garden" is a short poem, but it is one of the greatest expressions in literature of poignant sorrow and piercing sadness.

Inspired by Lucy: - This poem was perhaps inspired by Donne's passion for the Countess Lucy of Bedford, a highly cultured and accomplished lady who did not feel anything stronger than friendship for the poet. The poet has given a most powerful expression to his frustrated (baffled) passion. His art which we can analyse to some extent, deserves admiration.

An expression of disappointed love: - He comes to Twicknam garden in order that the beautiful sights and sounds around him, might ease his anguish. But no, he finds that his bleak and desolate mood does not yield to the soothing influence of the atmosphere. On the contrary, the trees seemed to be laughing and mocking him to his face. If the garden were as beautiful as the garden of Eden, the thought of love within him was like the serpent to spoil the beauty of the place.

Contrast between the natural atmosphere and the poet's mood: - Donne expresses his mental state in a series of attractive conceits. He is a self-traitor, as he cherishes in his bosom the spider love, which transforms everything, even the heavenly manna can be turned into poison by it. If the garden is paradise, then his passion is the serpent. He wishes to be a mandrake and grow there in the garden (for the mandrake is a plant that feels pain) or a stone fountain, for he is always weeping,

Donne's intellectual contempt for women: - In the third stanza, his intellectual contempt for women is expressed in an intricate series of images. He is the stone fountain and his tears are the true tears of love. Lovers should come and take away in crystal phials these tears and compare them with those shed by their mistresses at home. If those do not taste as Donne's do, then they are not true tears of love. Thus he implores lovers not to be misled by the tears their mistresses shed, for you can no more judge woman's thoughts by their tears than you can judge their dresses by their shadow.

Paradoxical thought in the closing lines: - Donne ends his poem with a paradox (anything that goes against the accepted opinion). The woman, he loves, is true and chaste; she is quite honest, that is why Donne cannot enjoy her love. And it is the perversity of the female sex that the only woman who is honest and true should be the one whose honesty and truth kill the poet, otherwise, perhaps she would not be so chaste and true. In Donne's view, woman is a kind of plague devised by God for man.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

This poem was addressed to the Countess Lucy of Bedford—a cultured and accomplished lady of the seventeenth century. She entertained a friendly affection for Donne the poet, which could hardly be given the name of "love"'. The poet, a sad and forlorn lover, finds himself in a mood of dejection. Even nature fails to soothe his tormented soul. It is a

song of sorrow pervaded by nothing except the bleakness of despair. It expresses the anguish of a lover's heart who has fallen a prey to sorrow and who cannot drown it even in nature. For its sombre atmosphere and intensity of grief, the poem has not been surpassed by any lyric in English poetry. It is a passionate outburst of sorrow expressing yearnings of unfulfilled love. The lady to whom it is addressed was never in love with Donne. It is possible that Donne misconstrued her friendly regard for him. In its poignancy of sorrow, the poem reminds us of Keats's La Belle Dame Sans Merci and Shelley's lyric, A Widow Bird Sat Mourning.

SONG—SWEETEST LOVE

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This lyric was addressed by the poet to his wife Anne More when he had to take leave of her on the occasion of his undertaking a journey to a foreign country. It is brilliant and unconventional love-lyric which stands out in the entire love-poetry of Donne. It is written in a tripping metre. There, is a freshness and naturalness about this poem which is missing from the honeyed verses of the Elizabethan lyricists and song writers.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

It is a singularly frank, realistic and sincere song of parting. The reason is obvious. There is a perfect equality of love between the lover-and the sweet-heart. The lover takes for granted his love for his beloved and vice versa. The artificial fears and sighs of the lover are after the fashion of the poet Petrarch. They are kept at bay because they are so cheap, boring and tiresome. Donne's love-song expresses mutual human, love. Both the lover and his lady-love are grieved at the parting, but the lover being a mail and scholar can deduce some higher thoughts from even this experience, which soothe and calm both of them. Though it is a, simple love-song, there is the development of an intellectual design. The lover feels the sorrow of parting, and even grows some-what pessimistic in stanzas I and III. But abruptly he turns away from thoughts of death and pessimism and begins to dwell upon their mutual relationship. She must not grieve, for that would hurt him, since he is a part of her. In the last stanza sorrow is cast away, and the very idea of parting is dismissed as something irrelevant, since

> **They who one another keep**
> **Alive, ne'er parted be.**

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Love triumphs over the idea of parting. The final stanza is a typical example of Donne's habit to charge emotions with thought Deane is at his best when he allows fullest scope to love, so that it embraces both the body and the spirit.

The lyric contains two beautiful conceits in the last but one stanza, viz.

> **When thou sigh'st them sigh'st not wind,**
> **But sigh'st my soul away;**
> **When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,**
> **My life's blood doth decay.**

AIR AND ANGELS

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This is a poem of love and has little to do with air and angels. The poet is fed up with the Platonic idea of love—love as something holy and spiritual. He is also not happy with the worship of the beloved and the admiration of her beauty which the Petrarchan poets did.

He realizes the hollowness and hypocrisy of the idealization of love. Love demands something concrete. It must have a physical base. Love can grow only by mutuality and co-operation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The poet discusses the soul-body relationship. Just as the angels manifest themselves in the air by a voice or light, in the same way love which is something idealistic, must express itself through some concrete medium. In the beginning he thought love was like a spirit or an angel, but subsequently he realised that love must be expressed through a medium, namely the human body. The beloved is the body of the soul of love. Love has now been concretized in the beloved and as such she has become the cynosure of his eyes. He appreciates the beauty of her lips, eyes and brow.

The steadiness of love: - Love cannot exist in a vacuum. It must have a concrete expression. Just as a ballast (heavy load) is necessary to steady the movement of a ship, in the same way, something more important than the appreciation of the bodily beauty is necessary to stabilise love. Mere admiration of her hair or some aspect of her beamy is not enough. There must be a substantial and objective expression of love. What Donne wants is physical union which can give both continuity and stability to man-woman relationship.

Man's active love: - Just as angels need the cover of air in order to be recognisable, so the lover must have the love of the beloved as a sphere for his love. There is, however, a difference between man's love, and woman's love. Man's love may be compared to an angel and woman's love to air. This implies that man is generally more active than woman in the game of love-making. The traditional concept of woman's coyness and modesty does make one feel that she plays the second fiddle in the orchestra of love. But just as there is harmony in the angel-air relationship, there should be mutuality and response in man-woman relationship.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

This is one of the 'highly intellectualised' of Donne's love poems. The title does not suggest the subject of love. Even so, the poet describes divine love in terms of the flesh. He borrows images and concepts from metaphysics, navigation and scholasticism in order to prove the point that both physical base and mutuality ate essential for the experience of love. The idea of using ballast to the ship of love for its smooth sailing is original and so is the concept of the disparity between man's passion and woman's response. That man's love is an angel and woman's love the air, and the harmony of the two is necessary for the concretization and consummation of love provides a sane and fitting conclusion to the poem.

SONG: (GO AND CATCH A FALLING STAR)

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This song was posthumously published in 1633 in the volume entitled 'Songs and Sonnets'. It was written by Donne in his youth when he saw a good deal of London life. The subject of woman's inconstancy was a stock subject but Donne enlivened it with his personal experience. His gay life in London and his association with different women in London only confirmed his view about woman's faithlessness.

In this poem, the poet, through a series of images, shows the impossibility of discovering a true and faithful woman. While the poets following the Petrarchan tradition made of woman a heroine and a goddess, worthy of love and admiration, the

metaphysical poets poked fun at woman's fashions, weakness and faithlessness. Shakespeare's maxim—"Frailty thy name is woman" —was quite popular in the age of Donne. The fickleness of woman could be more easily experienced than described. The cynical attitude to the fair sex in the early poems of Donne, is in contrast with the rational attitude to love and sex to be found in his later poems.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

According to Donne, it is impossible to fins; a loyal and chaste woman. Woman's inconstancy proved a popular subject with the Elizabethan and the Metaphysical poets. The poet, through irony and exaggeration suggests the impossibility of the undertaking to discover a true and fair woman. Fair women will have lovers and therefore it is not possible for them to be faithful to any of them. (Faithfulness on the part of an ugly and uninviting woman can be a possibility because she will not be able to attract lovers). The poet mentions a number of impossible tasks—catching a falling star or meteor, begetting a child on a mandrake root, memory of past years, finding the name of the person who clove the Devil's foot, listening to the music of the fabulous mermaids, changing human nature so as to make it indifferent to envy and jealousy or finding out the climate which would promote man's honesty. Just as it is impossible to do these jobs, in the same way it is impossible to find a faithful woman. Even if a man were to travel throughout the world for ten thousand days and nights—this would cover more than twenty-seven years—till his hair grew grey, he would not come across a faithful woman. He might have seen many wonderful scenes and sights, but he would not have seen the most wonderful sight of all—that of a true and fair woman.

A real pilgrimage: - The poet is very keen on discovering a true and fair woman if there be any such in the world. If any one tells the poet that there is such a woman, he would go on a pilgrimage to see her. She would really deserve his admiration and worship. The poet, however, feels that the journey will be futile, for even such woman's faithfulness will be temporary. By the time one writes a letter to her, she would have enjoyed with two or three lovers. Hence the poet despairs about seeing any constant woman.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Though technically the poem is a 'song' which should have sweetness, lilt and smoothness, it has a lot of argument. The colloquial form of the poem—the speaking voice in a real situation—deserves attention. The rhythm is similar to that of speech rhythm which changes according to the needs of the argument. 'The breaking of the tetrameter form in lines seven and eight (with two syllables each) is a dramatic device that projects tension rather than irregularity, and indicates the stress that one would use in a dramatic reading. "The poet constantly indulges in dislocating the accepted rhythms, dropping his lines most unexpectedly (though always giving us pleasant surprises) but the final impression is not one of confession but of an inner logic of the poet's experience". The use of hyperbole is understandable: "Ten thousand days and nights till age snow white hairs on thee". The witty ironic reversal in the last stanza is a device commonly used by Donne. All his journey and trouble in finding a true and fair woman would result in 'love's labour lost'. The poet draws images from a wide field of knowledge—mythology, Christianity and legendary love. He proves his thesis with a masculine gusto and youthful vivacity.

A VALEDICTION: OF WEEPING

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The poem A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning was written practically at the same time, when the poet was about to leave for a visit to a foreign country. The poet wants to tell his wife to take this temporary separation in her stride and neither to lament or weep, for after all, this will only disturb the peace of mind of both staying at different places. How to take a separation with tears or sighs or with patience and resignation, this is the theme of the poem. Playing on the image of floods and tides, the poet ultimately comes to the conclusion that mutual understanding and forebearance are necessary, for romantic lamenting and sighing will only increase their sorrow and frustration.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

In the beginning, the poet wants to weep out his heart—just to give an outlet to his pent-up feeling for his wife—because he is going out and this separation is intolerable. Of course, the poet's wife is as unhappy as the poet himself at the prospect of separation and loneliness. The poet's tears are worth something because they bear his wife's stamp—"thy face coins, them," but with copious tears, the two are reduced to nothing. It is therefore better that they should weep no more.

The poet compares the tear to a globe and the tears shed by his wife will overflow the world. His tears combined with hers, will cause a deluge and much unhappiness. In fact, the deluge will destroy both of them though they never intended that both of them should die thus

Tides and storms: - The poet's wife, like the moon, is capable of causing high tides capable of drowning the poet. Similarly, her sighs are powerful enough to cause sea-storms which may hasten his death. So at the end, the poet suggests that they should desist from sighing 'one another's death' because it would be mutually destructive. The poet feels that weeping at the time of separation is natural, but it has to be reduced to the minimum because it will destroy the peace of mind of both of them.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

There is an organic development of imagery. One image leads to the other. For example the tear is first compared to a coin and this leads to the 'stamp', and the 'mint' and the 'sovereign' and the 'worth'. The tear is round like a globe; the globe has a number of continents; their profuse tears will drown the creation, the universe and thereby destroy it like the Deluge. The beloved is like the moon. She will cause 'tides' and 'storms' and subsequent 'death'. All these images are interlinked, and convey a sense of unified sensibility. There is another image of round and 'pregnant' tears. The tears are round and large like pregnancy, because they hold a reflection of the beloved inside them. Similarly, the falling of tears indicates the falling of the beloved, and thus being reduced to 'nothing'. The poet draws images from geography, theology and astronomy. Even so he does not lose his grip on reality. The situation of the impending separation is faced boldly and the need of poise and patience is stressed. William Empson writes in this connection: "Its passion exhausts itself; it achieves at the end the sense of reality he was looking for, and for some calm of mind."

A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This is a personal poem showing the pure love and devotion of the poet to his beloved. Some persons feel that the poem is addressed to his wife Anne More.

The poet is about to leave in the end of 1611 for a short visit to France but this absence of a few weeks may not be taken as an occasion of separation and lamentation. The

poet's wife was in a bad state of health. The poet shows the uniqueness of true love and that it can stand separation on account of mutual confidence and affection. This separation may be deemed like death, but as good men are not afraid of death, true lovers are not afraid of separation. This is not a farewell to love, but an exposition of true and devoted love which can stand the shock of temporary separation, because it is not based on sex or physical attraction.

The critics differ about the quality and type of argument used by Donne to console his partner. Helen Gardner thinks that this is 'not an argument to use to a wife who has no need to hide her grief at her husband's absence', and therefore the poem may be regarded as an address of a lover to his lady friend. Coleridge, however, remarked: "It is an admirable poem which none but Donne could have written. Nothing was ever more admirably made than the figure of the compass" Dr. Johnson disliked the image of the compass and observed: "To the comparsion of a man that travels and his wife stays at home with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim". Grierson, however, admired it as 'the tenderest of Donne's love poems'. In spite of the differences of opinion there is no doubt that the love mentioned in the poem is pure and realistic.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The poet addresses his beloved to offer her consolation for his short absence. Just as virtuous men are not afraid of death, in the same way true lovers are not afraid of separation. Separation only tests their loyalty and devotion. Ordinary lovers who are addicted to sex may not be able to stand separation. Therefore, his beloved should neither shed tears nor heave sighs. This absence is a sort of touch-stone to test their mutual love.

Men are afraid of earthquakes and the damage caused by them. However, the movement of the heavenly bodies, though much greater and more violent, is quiet and harmless. Similarly, ordinary lovers may lament a separation but their love is so holy and pure that in spite of separation, they have no feeling of loneliness. Their love is so chaste and refined that physical absence does not matter to them at all. Their love is not based on physical enjoyment.

Pure love: - The lovers cannot define the nature and essence of their pure love. It is a refined love of the mind and has nothing to do with the joys of sex. Their souls are one. Temporary separation cannot cause a breach of love. Absence extends the domain and expanse of love. Just as gold is beaten to thinness and its purity is in no way affected, in the same way their pure love will expand and in no way lose its essence. The lovers are like a lump of gold and the quality of their love cannot change. The frontiers of their love will extend and their mutual confidence and loyalty will in no way be affected.

A pair of compasses: - Donne employs the conceit of 'twin compasses'. Their souls may be two but they are united at a centre like the two sides of a compass. The soul of the beloved is like the fixed foot of the compass as she stays at home. The poet's soul is like the other foot of the compass which moves, so to say in a circle. The fixed foot leans towards the moving foot, and afterwards, the moving foot rejoins the fixed foot. The rejoining of the encircling foot suggests the return of the poet to his beloved and their union—in spite of their separate identities—is the very consummation and joy of love. The poet proves that in spite of separation, the lovers are united in mutual affection and loyalty. James Reeves writes in this connection: "We are like the two legs of a pair of compasses, you are the fixed one in the centre. Further my soul goes from yours, the more yours leans towards mine; and as mine comes home, so yours revives. Your soul is the centre of my being, and keeps mine constant as it circles round you."

CRITICAL COMMENTS

The poem consists of nine quartrains and is quite smooth in its rhythm. However, its images and conceits enrich its significance. The comparison of separation to death is obvious. Just as good people face death patiently and quietly, in the same way, true lovers face separation willingly. Ordinary lovers may view separation as an earthquake because their love is based on the physical relationship. True lovers are like the heavenly bodies, the movement of which is greater and violent but causes no injury or harm. Holy love is not affected by movement or change of environment. There is another conceit of the gold beaten to thinness. The quality of the gold remains unaffected though its area and its dimensions increase. In the same way, the quality of love remains constant in spite of the extension of the gambit of love. The best conceit of the stiff twin compasses is extremely appropriate and fits the theme like a glove. The individuality of the lover is maintained while their basic unity, is symbolised by the screw which fixes the two sides of the compass. This fixed foot rotates while the moving foot revolves in a circle and then gets rejoined to the fixed foot. While moving foot circumscribes, the fixed foot leaves it, showing the mutuality and interdependence of the two. In this connection A. J. Smith writes:

"The subject of this poem is a metaphysical problem; that of the union of the lovers even when they are separated…It is in the very respect in which they are separated, that he wishes to show his lovers are united. The souls are one substance, which has the invisibility of air, but also the obvious unity of a lump of gold. It is to stress this last point that the compasses are brought in. For gold, though originally solid enough, falls under suspicion of being likely to vanish away, once it has been compared to air. Compasses do not vanish; they have not the remotest connection either with physical or metaphysical subtlety. Hence, once the needful subtlety has been expanded, they close the poem and symbolize it—not, however, by their oddity."

The strength of the poem lies in its argument and the use of appropriate conceits and images. Sometimes hyperbole is used to emphasise a point that "tears" are floods and 'sighs' are tempests. The poet has been able to prove his point that his absence is no cause for mourning for his beloved because their love is pure and constant.

THE RELIC

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This is one of the important poems addressed to Mrs. Magdelen Herbert who was the poet's friend and benefactor. It would be difficult to imagine as some people feel that this poem might refer to some other woman whom Donne knew in his youth.

Moreover, some other poems also connected with Herbert, like The Blossom, and The Funeral, make one feel that this poem too refers to the poet's same friend. There was nothing wrong in writing about a married woman. One of the Petrarchan ways of courtship was the poet's addressing and worshipping the lady from a distance and deriving a sort of vicious satisfaction from holy love. His Platonic love for the lady is reflected in the poem 'Relic' means a part or momento of some holy person or some souvenir or keep-sake worshipped after his death and which is supposed to have miraculous powers. The lover has got a relic—a bracelet of bright hair from his beloved and he keeps it tied round his wrist. After his death, this relic will continue to remain on his body and this will be an object of adoration or worship for the later generation of lovers. It is not only a symbol of love but also a sort of miracle because it shows that love is independent of physical wish. This sort of holy or sex-less love is indeed a miracle. It represents a mirror of souls where even the difference of sex is obliterated.

Moreover, in this kind of pure love, the lovers did not know what they loved and why they loved. This nuptial and Platonic love defies description and is beyond the powers of language and communication.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The poem begins with a horrible situation—some persons are digging the poet's grave in order to bury some other dead body. There is a dig at woman's constancy because a grave can accommodate more than one corpse at a time. The person digging his grave will find a 'bracelet of bright hair about the bone'. How it is possible to find 'bright hair' when the grave is full of dust and insects, is not explained by the poet. The digger will think that it is the grave of a loving couple and the bracelet of hair is a device to make the souls meet at the grave on the Day of Judgement and stay for a little while together.

Wishful adoration: - If the grave is dug in some heathen age or land, the bracelet will be brought to the king or the Bishop to be blessed and recognized as a Relic. The hair shall perhaps be regarded as a relic of Mary Magdalen and the poet's bones as those of Christ or some other saint. Such relics will be worshipped by the lovers for its miraculous powers. The later lovers will feel that their love will be rewarded with success if they worship the relic.

Miracles of love: - The poet and his beloved were engaged in a sort of Platonic love-relationship. They did not know what they loved in each other and why, though they loved 'well and faithfully'. Moreover, their love was not dependent on sexual relationship. Their love was 'independent of the difference of sex just as the love of guardian angels is not physical but spiritual. Their love was based on a close affinity between the two souls. The lovers may have exchanged formal courtesies of kissing at the time of meeting or separation, but there was nothing more than that Donne seems to suggest that the state of nature permitted free physical sex while our human laws have restricted sexual freedom. This may have a reference to the marriage of his lady-friend to Mr. Herbert. His love has been restricted by the lady's marriage and as such his love can now only be 'Platonic', such a love cannot be described in words. The greatest miracle is that this was a sexless and pure love arid the beauty of the beloved is almost unsurpassed. She is a miracle of beauty and object of holy devotion.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

In spite of the poet's adoration of his beloved in a mood of Platonic love, he cannot help satirising the sex in general. In the lines three and four he has a fling at the inconstancy of woman because his beloved, like any woman, can have more than one man in her bed. Secondly, he lashes at women for their superstition in worshipping the bracelet of bright hair as a relic—"All women shall adore us." He thinks that men are not so foolish or superstitious as women. Therefore, the relic will be adored by 'some men'.

Three-fold theme: - The poem deals with love, death and religion. Pure love, as presented in this poem defies death. At the same time, this love lives through a momento or souvenir—'the bracelet of bright hair'. There is a kind of contradiction as this pure love is dependent on a small bit of hair. If it were a true union of souls it would not need such a flimsy token. The idea of death is emphasised by the grave and the Day of Judgment. Religion is brought in through the Bishop, "the last busy day', 'Mary Magdalen' and 'guardian angels'. The worship of the poet and his beloved as saints of love alter their death is a great tribute to their holy love. In fact, love becomes as sacred as religion. The three topics are intimately related to one another.

Philosophy of love: - Here, the poet deals with a higher and spiritual love. It is based on 'feelings' and mutual understanidng. This kind of spiritual love is seldom found in the world. This sort of holy love is a sort of miracle both for man and woman.

Style: - The poem consists of three stanzas, each of eleven lines. The fifth and seventh lines are shorter than the rest. This is a poem of fancy where the miracle of hair in the grave sets the ball rolling. The unusual comparisons—grave and woman, lovers and guardian-angels, the beloved and Mary Magdalen add to the charm of the poem. The laws injuring the otherwise seals of nature set free is also a fanciful figure of speech. All in all, we must admire the originality of the poem and the fancies which are enriched by Donne's sallies against woman.

THE FLEA

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The flea has been the subject of love-poetry. The argument used by the poet is that the flea has a free access to the body of the beloved which is denied to the lover. Donne, however, makes a plea for physical union, which is necessary for spiritual love. Donne's originality and intensity makes it a powerful lyric. Grierson observes: "It is a strange choice to our mind, but apparently the poem was greatly admired as a masterpiece." Coleridge paid a tribute in a poem:

> **Thrice-honoured fleas; great you all as Donne**
> **In Phoebus archives registered are ye,**
> **And this your patent of nobility.**

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The flea is a symbol of the poet's passionate plea for physical and sensuous love. The lover speaks to his beloved as he points to the flea which has sucked her blood. The flea has also sucked his blood and therefore the bloods of the lover and the beloved have mixed in its body. It has brought about a union of two bloods. The flea has enjoyed union with the beloved without any courtship or marriage. This is not considered as a matter of sin or shame or loss of virginity. The flea is superior to the lover because it can enjoy physical union without the formality of marriage.

Triple murder: - Donne goes a step further. He compares the flea to a temple and to a marriage bed. Just as the two lovers are united in the temple in a bond of marriage, so the two bloods have been united in the body of the flea. Its body is a sacred temple where their marriage has taken place. Similarly, their blood has mingled in the body of the flea and so its (flea's) body is like their marriage bed. The two have mixed up in the body of the flea in spite of her objections and those of her parents. Her killing the flea would be an act of triple murder—murder of the flea, murder of the lover and her own murder. This is a sin and so she must spare the flea.

No loss of honour: - The beloved kills the flea and the poet feels unhappy. He chides her for her cruelty. What, after all, was the crime of the flea? She sucked the blood of both. Sucking a drop of her blood has not made her weak; she has also not lost her honour or chastity. Just as she has felt no weaker and lost no honour by the sucking of the blood by the flea, in the same way, her physical union with the lover will not affect either her health or her honour. She should, therefore, willingly surrender herself to her lover. The poet has rejected the notions of honour or chastity which are generally held out as arguments against sexual indulgence. Even spiritual love has its prelude in physical love. Why should his beloved object to his overtures?

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Donne uses new images and conceits to advantage through the flea-bite. First, the mingling of the bloods of the lover and the beloved in the body of the flea is no matter of sin or shame. The flea has brought about the mingling of the blood of the two and therefore there should be no objection to their sex-relationship. The conceit of the flea as a temple and as a marriage-bed is original, so also the sin of triple-murder by the proposed crushing of the flea by the beloved. When the beloved has killed the flea with her nails, the poet regards it as shedding blood of innocence. Her victory over the flea is imaginary rather than real. She will lose as much honour by sexual relationship with the poet as the honour lost by the flea-bite.

Donne believes in physical relationship between the lovers. Sex is above fear or shame. The world of the lovers is different from the ordinary world. However, critics differ about the justification of sex-relationship. James Keeve calls the poem "cynical and unpleasant", while A.J. Smith regards it anti-courtly and anti-Petrarchan. There is no doubt that the poet's plea for physical union is both personal and original. The poem is remarkable for its emotional intensity and vigour.

THE GOOD MORROW

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This is one of the finest poems of Donne explaining the complex nature of love. Initially, love has an element of fun and sex. It is like the dark night—an experience which is hot quite clear. But with the dawn, the true nature of things is revealed. The title suggests the dawn of the true love, its essential quality and the mutual understanding and confidence between the souls of the lover and the beloved. This kind of pure love provides a complete world to the lovers—a world without coldness, fear and decay. It is much better than the physical world. This perfect love is neither subject to time nor death.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

In the beginning, the poet examines the nature of the first experiences of love. The first set of experiences is childish—the physical joys of love. The second set of experiences is much richer—it is the experience of spiritual love in which the voices of one soul are echoed by the other soul. The mature experiences of love make one disregard the first foolish acts of love, when so to say, the souls were asleep in the den of seven sleepers. The poet can only dream of true love in the first stage. The atmosphere of sleep, stupor and dream shows the fleeting and unstable nature of this kind of immature love.

The dawn of true love: - The past life spent in childish love was a sort of dream and blank. The night of oblivion and unreality is about to end. The dawn of true love is imminent and it awakens the soul of lovers to the meaning of true love. This true love makes them open out their hearts to each other, without any fear or inhibition. Their love for each other is all-absorbing and all-satisfying. They have no delight in other scenes or places. Each is like a world to the other. This world of love is everywhere. The poet is happy with the world of love. Let sailors discover new worlds and make charts and maps of the lands they have discovered. On the other hand, the lovers are content in their own worlds. Each of them has a world, but the two worlds of the two lovers put together, make one world of love.

The two hemispheres: - As the lovers look at each other, each of them sees his own image in the other's eyes. Their looks reflect the simplicity, purity and honesty of their hearts. Their two faces may be compared to two hemispheres which together make up a whole world. The two hemispheres of the faces of lovers are better than the geographical

hemispheres, because they do not have the 'sharp North' and the 'declining West'. The 'sharp North' implies coldness and indifference—to which their love is not subject—and the 'declining West' symbolises decay and death from which the lovers are free. According to certain philosophers, when different elements, which go into the making of a thing, are not harmoniously mixed, the thing is liable to decay and death. This is not true of their love because their love is harmonious, and is sweet-blooded. As such their love is immortal and beyond the vagaries of time and clime.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

In his inimitable way, Donne begins the poem with a question—what thou and I did till we loved? This rhetoric easily captures the attention of the reader. The poet compares the first stage of love—sex and enjoyment—with the mature type of love, the harmonious relationship of two souls. There is a lot of difference between the two types of love. The poet's wit is seen in his contrast between the two worlds—the worlds of the lovers and the geographical world. There is no 'sharp North' or 'declining West' in the world of lovers. It is a mutual love equal in quality and spirit—balanced and harmonised in such a manner that it is not subject to time or decay. The poet proceeds from the night-scene and the experience of sleepy love to the morning of pure love which gives him a new life and makes him discover a world in their little room. No navigator has ever found a world as wonderful as the world of love. This discovery of true love is as welcome as the greeting of a new day.

Donne's manner is that of 'concentration' advancing the argument in stages, reasoning till he is able to prove his point and drive it home to the reader. Like an able lawyer he presses his point in such a manner that it is very hard to refute it. Moreover, hemarshalls his images from different sources in such a way that the cumulative effect is irresistible. Grierson rightly points out that the imagery has been drawn from a variety of sources, i.e. myths of everyday life, e.g. 'the seven sleepers' den, 'suck'd on country pleasures' and 'wishing in the morning', 'one-little room'; the geographical world, 'sea-discoveries', 'Maps', 'hemispheres'; and lastly, the scholastic philosophy 'what-ever dyes, was not mixt equally'. The relation between one object and the other is made intellectually rather than verbally.

Donne's method in spite of his scholarly references is not pedantic and appeals to the lay reader by its sincerity and sharp reasoning.

THE CANONIZATION

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Love has been an object of fun and hair-splitting with the metaphysical poets. Donne has also dealt with different moods of love and has played with its several fancies and visions. In this poem, however, he has taken a positive and serious view of love. It is a selfless and saintly affection as worthy of respect as worship. Here we find his great devotion to Anne Moore—his beloved—though the marriage marred his career and brought him into disrepute. The main idea is that his love does not interfere with the lives of others and so why should they take exception to it. Donne's passion is physical and the lovers really believe in sexual indulgence. Their bodies become one and so do their souls, as in a religious mystery.'

The paradox: - Donne treats physical love as if it were divine love. Saints are canonized for their renunciation of the world and its comforts. In the same way, the lovers have renounced the material world. The love of Donne for his beloved causes no damage or injury to the society or to the world. Other people continue to carry on their

normal daily chores and duties. The lovers have lost the world but gained more in the world of each other. The lovers are, so to say, dead to the world. They have, therefore, deserved the status of saints. They are the saints whose blessings other lovers will invoke. The lovers are devoted to each other as a saint is devoted to God. Some people may regard it as paradox of Christian Canonization, but there is no doubt that the tone of the poem is both serious and convincing.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The debate: - Donne begins his argument with a friend who dissuades him from love-making. He tells him to stop his nonsensical talk and allow him to love. Let his friend regard his love as a natural or hereditary disease. Let his friend mind his own business and look after his own career and fortune.

Love is harmless: - After all, the poet's love does not cause any harm or damage to anyone. It does not disturb the even flow of social life. His sighs and tears have caused no offence to anyone. People are busy in their own affairs. His profession is love and so why should anyone take objection to it

Secret of love: - The poet deals with the secret of love. Love is an association or union of two persons. Human isolation is awful; the lovers find mutual satisfaction in love. They are like flies and tapers which enjoy being consumed to extinction. Like the Phoenix, the lovers are resurrected from their ashes. Both are consumed by the fire of passion and out of this consummation emanates their resurrection. Physical love is elevated to the plane of spiritual love.

Life beyond death: - The poet and his beloved are prepared to die for love if they cannot live by love. The tale of their death will form the subject of love poets. Their love will be commemorated in lyric and sonnets. They will attain the status of saints of love. People will copy their love and regard it as a model.

Martyr-saints: - Lovers will worship the poet and his beloved as the martyrs to love. Lovers will invoke the blessings of these martyr saints. Love will bring them both peace and solace. Like them other lovers will devote themselves entirely to their respective beloveds. Each will find in his beloved the whole soul of the world. The lovers will pray to God to grant them the same kind of true love which the poet and the beloved enjoyed while living in the world.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Mark the sudden and dramatic opening line of the poem. The first two stanzas are rhetorical full of contempt and rebuff for those who argue against love. There is a lot of hyperbole. Can 'sighs' turn into 'sea storms' or 'tears' cause floods or the 'heat of passion' cause plagues. Donne uses these metaphors to laugh at the Petrarchan paraphernalia of love. Donne also laughs at two good professions—soldiering and litigation which make fun of love.

Organic imagery is a strong point of the poem. The two lovers moving round each other like flies or again consuming themselves like tapers; or again the images of the eagle and the dove—the violent one preying on the weak, and ultimately the riddle of the Phoenix indicate the whole process of love from courtship to consummation of love. Though they are two, they are one, of the neutral sex like the Phoenix. As the Phoenix is reborn from its ashes, the lovers are reborn (revitalised) after sexual indulgence. In fact, Donne treats physical love like divine love. The canonization which leads to the lovers being regarded as the martyr saints of love will make them a model of love. The 'rage' of love will be transformed into peace. The lovers need no mention in history-books or any

monuments or inscriptions. Donne's wit is seen in his mention of the King's face—the real one in the court, the fake one stamped on coins. The lovers' eyes are the mirrors in which each sees the reflection or the image of the other. Each eye contains the whole world with its countries, towns and courts. In short, the poem shows the craftsmanship of Donne at its best.

THE FUNERAL

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This poem is a mixture of light-heartedness and seriousness. The poet has been rejected by his beloved. In sheer desperation and agony he wishes to sacrifice his life as a martyr on the altar of the god of love.

But in the meantime, he has secured a token of love from his beloved. This is a lock of her hair which he has worn round his arm. He thinks that the beloved's hair will preserve his dead body and prevent it from decay and disintegration. It is a kind of charm or rather an embodiment of the outward soul which will give him immortality. The poet ultimately wishes to die as a martyr but fearing that the hair may be worshipped as a relic, he wants it to be buried in the grave along with him. This will be a sort of revenge on the cruel beloved, because some part of her body will be in the grave while she is still alive.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The idea of the bracelet of the beloved's hair worn by the poet is the central theme of another, poem called The Relic. There the poet mentions that the hair is a sort of device which will make the souls of the lover and the beloved meet at the grave and spend some time together before the Day of Judgment. The bracelet of hair will also be regarded as a relic, sought by all men and women in need of love. This relic will be expected to perform miracles and bring success to lovers. In this poem, however, the hair is supposed to save the lover's dead body from disintegration. Secondly, the hair is a sort of a hand-cuff or fetter for causing pain to lover. The poet wants the hair buried with him as a sort of revenge on his beloved for his rejection. So, the bracelet of hair worn by the lover leads to an entirely different situation in this poem.

The poet wants no one to take away or destroy the bracelet of hair on his arm because it is a kind of charm which will preserve the limbs of the body. Just as the brain controls all the parts of the body, in the same way, her hair will hold together the limbs of his body in an organic whole. Perhaps the beloved never thought of this. She thought that her hair was a kind of charm or manacle to cause suffering to the lover. The poet, however, feels that he must punish the beloved for rejecting his love. He will commit suicide and thereby become love's martyr. He will have the satisfaction of carrying a part of the beloved to the grave. If she could not save him from dying, he could not help burying a part of her body.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

The poem contains three stanzas of eight lines each. Lines two, five and seven are comparatively short. This is a typical poem which uses the conceit of the hair which first causes some satisfaction and then some justification and anguish. The poet uses the image of the soul and the brain for the function performed by the hair. Then he compares the hair to manacles and as such a source of pain and suffering. Finally, the hair may become a relic and a piece of idolatry. All these fanciful images are used by the poet in order to express his anger and frustration. All in all, the poem records a series of

moods or attitudes of the rejected lover centred on the subtle wreath of the beloved's hair on his arm.

THE SUN RISING

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

"The Sun Rising" is a typical poem by Donne, characterised by his usual vigour, sprightliness and freshness. It is a "saucy, muscular poem". It expresses a lover's vexation against sun-rising. The dawn is regarded as an impertinence which comes to disturb the lovers. The poet is delightfully out-spoken and defiant. He ridicules the sun as a "saucy pedantic wretch" and calls in question his right to peep through windows and curtains of a lover's bed-room. There is defiance, contempt, perfect love and the deftly moving shuttle of metaphysical conceit. The supremacy of love which transcends both time and space, for it knows 'no season and no climes' is established with a daring jugglery of words.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

This poem, like most of Donne's love-poems is inspired by the poet's love for his wife, Anne Moore. Donne's love amounts to a passion. It is a perfect synthesis of the spiritual and physical love. There are brilliant metaphysical conceits in the second and third stanzas of the poem. For example, the beloved is supposed to be combining in herself all the fragrance and the gold of East and West Indies:

Look and to-morrow late tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine,
Be where though left'st them, or lie here with me.

The lover and the beloved are compared to all the states and all the princes of the world, rolled into one:

She's all slates, and all princes I;
Nothing else is;

The lover's bed room is considered to be the epitome of the whole world.

Shine here on us and thou art everywhere.

The poem is singularly free from the conventional and sentimental clap trap of love that was such a marked feature of Elizabethan love poetry. Donne's beloved rises superior to all the Elizabethan sweet-hearts in-as-much as she is an exalted being—she is all the states of the world rolied into one, she combines in herself all the fragrance of spices and all the gold of rich mine.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

A successful love poem: -The Sun Rising is one of the most successful love—poems of Donne. As a poet of love he can be an extreme realist and deals with the physical side of it as also its spiritual side. Here he treats of a situation very significant for wedded lovers, but unusual in the poetry of love—two lovers in bed who refuse to get up when the sun shines on them in the morning.

Language—bold and extravagant: - The poet chides the sun in language which for its boldness is unmatched in lyric poetry. The sun is a busy, and old fool; it is a saucy, and pedantic wretch. It can go and chide late school boys and apprentices, but has no jurisdiction over the poet and his wife. Lover's seasons do not run to the motions of the sun:

Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,

Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Full or metaphysical conceits: - In expressing his contempt for the sun, the poet displays all his learning and metaphysical wit, and extravagant conceit and employed in glorifying his beloved. Recent geographical discoveries supply him with the image of "both the Indias of spice and mine" (India and the West Indies and America). His wife is to him these two Indias in one.

Extravagant fancy: - The poet's extravagant fancy discovers that he and his beloved in their secure possession of each other, are like all states and princes to each other. Princes only imitate them. She is all the world contracted into one feminine form and hence, by shining on her, the sun performs his duty towards the whole earth. Following up this conceit, the poet says that if the sun shines on him and his wife, it is, in a sense, shining everywhere—the bed becomes its centre and the walls of the bed room its sphere.

Conclusion: - The poem is remarkable for its boldness of thought and originality of execution. The way in which the sun is made to appear as an unwelcome guest and the way in which he is finally allowed to stay in the bedroom of the lovers, are the most striking examples of Donne's poetic inventiveness and ingenuity. The poet after establishing the supremacy of love, permits the sun, (in a very patronising manner, of course) to stay in his bed-room.

In this poem, the lover chides (rebukes) sun-rising because it disturbs the lovers. Love is above the sense of time. It knows no hours, days or months. The sun should not call on lovers; it should call on school apprentices, courtiers and country ants. Love knows no season nor clime. The whole world has contracted into the lover's bed-room. Thus the sun need not go round the earth, it should only pay a visit to the lover's bedroom and it would meet the whole world there.

THE ECSTASY

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

It is a complex and metaphysical poem dealing with the twin aspects of love—physical and spiritual. Some critics like Legouis find in it a plan for seduction with emphasis on the physical nature of love, while others like Helen Gardner find in it an affirmation of spiritual love. In fact, it deals with the relationship of the body and the soul in love.

What is 'extasie'? : - 'Extasie' is essentially a religous experience in which the individual soul, ignoring the body, holds converse with Divinity. It is a feeling of trance, of spiritual exaltation, and of Samadhi where the individual has a vision of the divine. Donne applies the feeling to the experience of the lovers and finds that the essence of love is not sex but an overpowering feeling of unity in diversity. In fact, true love is an activity of the soul. A new soul emanates from the two individual souls and makes the lover realise that love is, in its pure essence, spiritual. Donne has also interpreted love in a philosophic way. Love is an idea or a concept concretized through physical enjoyment of sex. He has also interpreted it according to the Platonic concept the desire of the moth for the star, longing of one soul to seek communication with another. Another idea introduced in the poem has been borrowed from astronomy. Just as heavenly bodies are moved by "intelligences" i.e., angelic spirits, in the same way souls are the motivating forces in human love, though they have no existence of their own. They are linked with the body, which is the overt and apparent machinery for love-making. The soul expresses itself through the body. In other words, the body is a medium used by the soul to achieve the consummation of love. Thus the poem uses a religious and mystical experience to interpret the complexity and depth of secular love.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

The physical setting: - The first stanza provides the physical setting of the two lovers. On the bank of a river over grown with violet flowers, the lovers sit quiet, looking into each other's eyes and holding hands firmly. This physical closeness offers a romantic and pastoral setting—their hands cemented in mutual confidence and the eyes as if strung on a thread. This sensually exciting scene is a forerunner to the actual physical union.

The poet compares the two lovers to the two armies. The souls are like the negotiators. They are not committed to either side. Only those who are gifted can understand the dialogue of the two souls, and realize the true nature of love.

True nature of love: - The communication of the souls of lovers reveals the true essence of love. Love is not sex-experience. It is rather a union of two souls. Each soul appears to keep its identity and as in horticulture, by transplantation the plant grows stronger and better, the new soul has a great strength and vitality. The fusion of the two souls is the real consummation of love. The new soul is composed of 'atoms' which are beyond decay. Just as the essence of the individual is not the body but the soul, in the same way, the essence of love is not sex but mutual dependence and affection. The body is no dross, but an alloy necessary for pure metals to become stronger. The body is the channel for the souls to inter-communicate with each other.

Is love physical or spiritual? : - To this old and complex question, Donne has a satisfactory answer. Love is dependent both on the soul and body. Love has to be concretized. This is possible only through the physical play of love. Donne feels that physical love is enriched by the mutual understanding of the souls of the two lovers. Spiritual love is not possible in a vacuum. Like heavenly beings who influence the actions of men through manifestation, the souls must express themselves through the bodies. The poet feels that an isolated soul is like a captive prince. Souls must return to the bodies and manifest the mystery of love. As from the blood comes strength and vigour which acts as an agent of the soul and binds together elements which go into the making of man, so the body and the sense organs are at the disposal and service of the lovers' souls, otherwise the soul cannot express themselves. The body is the book of the love. Great mystics have also pleaded for the evolution of physical love towards holy or divine love.

Finally, the poet feels that love ripens in the soul. As such, physical love and holy love are complementary. If some lover observes the poet and his beloved, he will hardly find any change in their behaviour when the lovers return to their bodies.

CRITICAL REMARKS

The poet employs an unusual desire through 'extasie' which means 'to stand out". The souls of the poet and his beloved as it were, stand out of their respective bodies and hold a dialogue revealing the true nature of their love. In a religious 'extasie' the soul holds a communication with God. Here the conversation is not between the soul and God but between two souls. Donne has artistically explained the religious and philosophical belief to throw light on physical and sensuous love. The greatness of the poem lies in reconciling the opposites—physical love with spiritual love, metaphysical belief with the scientific, the abstract with the concrete, the human element with the non-human. The images and the conceits are carefully selected to support the poet's views. The romantic setting in the beginning of the poem sets the mood of physical love—the violet flowers, the holding of hands and the cementing of the balms and the threading of the eye beams. The physical aspect of love must precede the spiritual union. Then comes the image of two armies and the soul acting as negotiator. Then, there are the images of the

new soul—emanating out of the two souls — stronger and abler because it is made out of ‘atoms’. The inter-dependence of the body and the soul is expressed through metaphors. The souls are moving spirits, while the bodies are the ’sphere’ in which the ’intelligences’ move. Just as the stars and planets give rise to natural phenomena which affect the fortunes of human beings, in the same way the soul must find expression through the body. Just as the spirits of blood unite the physical and metaphysical in love, so souls express themselves through the five senses in the body. The image of the body as lovers, is very vivid and convincing.

The poet shifts quickly from the physical to the spiritual and therefore this poem has an edge over other metaphysical poems. The very fact that critics disagree about the objective of the poem—seduction or spiritual transport—shows the complexity and the diversity of possible interpretations. On the whole, the critics praise the poet for his excellent performance. Coleridge said: “I would never find fault with metaphysical poems, were they all like this(Extasie) or just half as excellent.” James Smith commended the poem in the following words: “Donne does not write about many things; he is content with the identity of lovers as lovers, and their diversity as the human beings in which love manifests itself, the stability and self sufficiency of love, contrasted with the mutability and dependence of human beings; with the presence of lovers to each other, their physical unity, though they are separated by travel and death, the spirit demanding the succour of the flesh hampering the spirit, the shortcoming of this life, summarised by decay and death, contrasted with the divine to which it aspires.”

For reconciling the dichotomy between the flesh and the sensuous and the sublime, particularly in this poem, Donne deserves credit.

Oedipus Rex

Introduction to drama

Drama is a literary form involving parts written for actors to perform; it is a Greek word which means action. The origin of Western theatre is supposed to be found in Ancient Greece. Drama probably developed in Ancient Greece from the festivals, honouring Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and wine. In the Middle Ages, drama in Europe dealt with religious characterizations. The plays were mainly Biblical, thus had substantial relevance to Christian elements. Although the Christian church did much to suppress the performance of plays, it is actually in the church that medieval drama began. Mystery plays, the most famous of which is The Second Shepherd's Play, depicted Biblical episodes from the Creation to Judgment Day. Another important type that developed from church liturgy was the miracle play, based on the lives of saints rather than on Bible. The miracle play reached its peak in France and the mystery play in England. However, both types gradually became secularized. The Second Shepherds' Play, despite its religious seriousness, is most notable for its elements of realism and farce, while the miracle plays in France often emphasize comedy and adventure. A third type of religious drama is the morality play. The morality plays, which were mainly religious allegories, appeared early in the 15th century, the most famous being Everyman.

Drama has always been a target of the government and society. The reason why drama was criticized in Middle Ages was probably because actors were considered to be persons who were taking on other people's personalities, and were therefore thought either to be insane or possibly possessed by evil spirits. A second reason why drama was so often criticized might have been because theatre was considered immoral, blasphemous or subversive - we must note that theatrical performances were sometimes used as criticism of the government, able to awaken people. A third reason might have been religious since many of the medieval dramas were based on Christian church. Many of the plays were Biblical and were applicable to the Church.

Drama in England reached its peak during Queen Elizabeth's reign. Elizabethan drama ". . . has been called a great national utterance because in it spoke the spirit of England, despite all its imitations and borrowings from alien sources" and ". . . there has never been an age which so immediately responded to an artistic appeal" (Schelling xiii). We should notice the fact that ". . . [n]o plays closely resembling those of the great Elizabethans appeared before the last quarter of the sixteenth century, before the tragedies of Kyd and Marlowe and the comedies of Lyly and Greene" The public theatres were being built in 1576; and "the first powerful plays appeared about 1587" (Wells 4).

Queen Elizabeth died in 1603. In 1642 The English Civil War broke out between the Parliamentarians (Puritans) and the Royalists in England and theatres were closed to prevent public disorder. In 1644 The Globe Theatre was demolished by the Puritans. From 1642 onward for eighteen years, the theatres of England remained closed. They probably illegally performed plays but those performances were given in secrecy. Neither actors nor spectators were safe during those days of the Puritan rule. The dramatists were not allowed to be inspired during this time. The Puritans led by Oliver Cromwell opposed theatrical performances. "Puritanism declared [theatre] an ungodly and frivolous thing and decreed that it should be no more" (Schelling 274). In 1649, the

English Civil War resulted in the execution of King CharlesI and the establishment of a commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. Finally in 1660 the Stuart dynasty was restored to the throne of England and the theatres were reopened.

Charles's death marked the beginning of the eleven-year Interregnum in which Oliver Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector. After Cromwell's death, England turned to Charles's son and acknowledged him as Charles II. The exhumed heads of Cromwell, his son-in law, and the High Court's President were placed on public display atop Westminster Hall. The anniversary of Charles's execution became a date of commemoration on the liturgical calendar of the Anglican Church. (Sirico 51)

Charles II, the king, had been in France and he naturally brought with him some French fashions. That French influence was felt particularly in the theatre since "Charles returned from his exile with a very definite love of the drama and of literature in general (Nicoll 8). The drama of the Restoration, Thorndike states, ". . . was separated from the earlier periods by sixteen years of closed theatres and a virtual cessation of all dramatic composition;" ". . . the Restoration brought not only a revival but also a revolution - new fashions, new models, new foreign influence, a new age, and a changed society" (Thorndike 243).

Although the Puritans had lost their authority in political power, they had not lost courage in abusing the stage. The most violent attack was made by Jeremy Collier, a clergyman, in 1698, in a pamphlet called A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, Collier's attack on drama has three points: the so-called obscenity of the plays, the frequent references to the Bible and biblical characters, and the criticism, "slander and abuse flung from the stage upon the clergy". He criticized Shakespeare's Desdemona showing her love and chastity; he was opposed to any reference to anything connected to the Church or religion; and he was against any portrayal of the clergy. Collier even accused playwrights of glorifying all the sins, passions which they portrayed in their characters.

The Puritan Revolution was fought not only against the King, but also against theatre; but the theatre was never so finally and roundly defeated as the King. The skirmishes and battles were equally protracted and bitter, but the growth of the Elizabethan--Jacobean drama was so hardy and so dear to so many Englishmen that it never completely died. Ordinance after ordinance was passed against stage plays, but there was hardly a year in London from 1842 to 1660 when plays were not being given. The records are full of recurrent raids by the soldiers of Parliament, the seizure of players and their goods, the ransacking of playhouses and their forcible demolition, and the jailing of theatre people. But these very records show that the Puritans had not succeeded in destroying theatrical activity. (Roberts 228)

With the accession of Queen Anne in 1702, drama was again a target of criticism since Queen Anne "was completely disinterested in the arts, literature, and theatre" (Roberts 250). The beginning of the reign of Queen Anne in 1702 ". . . marked the final withdrawal of court interest in drama" Thus English theatre was no longer for the court but "the property of citizens (Roberts 252). The Age of Reason valued science, logic, and rationality; denied emotionalism and wanted an ordered society. In the area of literature, authors declared their independence of patrons, and writing became a form of

earning one's living. Prices for theatres were higher than today, and considerably higher than under Elizabeth I. Since drama became a commercial field, there had been innovations on the theatre buildings as well as stage props and costumes of the actors.

In the political turmoil of the nineteenth century in Europe, drama was sometimes abused. The ruling classes tended to use theatre as a propaganda instrument during the French Revolution (Roberts 350). In the twentieth century, on the other hand, drama consisted of realist settings true to life. The growing popularity of the motion picture affected drama. Soon radio and television increased in popularity, which foreshadowed the possible end of live theatre; yet it did not end.

Despite all the attacks and difficulties, theatre has always been alive. It has survived since the fifth century B.C. In its long history, theatre has always had rivals. However it has never been defeated; on the contrary, it has accomplished glorification. Theatre is not only an important part of a particular society that is depicted in plays; it is also the most human form of art that has ever existed.

The Contributions of Greek Theatre to Drama

The ancient Greeks are famous for their many contributions to the world. Among these contributions is one that has changed culture and the arts permanently. This contribution is theatre.

Greek theatre is considered the beginning of theatre as we know it. Theatre began in Athens, circa 600 BC, developing out of rituals at the Dionysia. The Dionysia was a festival for followers of the cult of Dionysus, god of wine and festivities. Greek theatre really began to take shape, however, around 400 BC. The first actor was named Thespis, and it is from his name that the word "thespian" originated. Thespis was born in Attica, in 534 BC. He began performing speeches from epic poems and stories of the day, speaking from that character's point of view. His shows were also interactive, as he often spoke with the audience. Since no theater really existed at the time, he traveled from place to place with a handcart. He used masks, makeup, and costumes to make his monologues more realistic.

Over time, theatre was changed and developed by forward-thinking playwrights. One such playwright, Aeschylus, introduced the concept of using a second character, so that dialogue and the interaction of the characters could be used as a plot device. Years later, another playwright, Sophocles, added another actor, steadily decreasing the importance of the chorus while increasing character interactions. Around the same time, Euripides gradually made theatre more natural and realistic, rather than the rigid, structured form of acting.

The theater itself was outdoors and known as an Amphitheater. It was semi-circular in shape, and terraced, allowing for each visitor to have perfect view. These seats were called the theatron, literally meaning the viewing area. On average, the Amphitheater was able to fit 1,500 viewers and was designed to have near perfect acoustics. There was usually a theater in each town, as theaters were also used for religious rituals and processions as well as entertainment. In the center was a circular platform called the orchestra. On the orchestra was an altar where sacrifices to Dionysus were performed. The stage itself was called the Proscenio. It was situated behind the orchestra, and was

constructed much like stages today, although most of the acting took place in the orchestra. The back of this stage had painted backgrounds to create the settings for each scene.

These buildings were most likely brightly painted, although the paint would have faded over time [Phillips]. Behind the stage, machines used for the performances were kept. These machines were advanced technology for their day, and included the Aeorema, the Ekeclema, and the Periactoi.

The Aeorema was one of the more commonly used. It was a large crane used to pull actors through the air. This was most often employed to create the illusion of gods, which led to the expression, "Deus ex Machina". The Ekeclema was a wheeled platform. This sometimes ferried dead bodies across the stage, as murders and suicides were not shown on stage. This tradition stemmed from the superstition that to kill a person on stage would be foretelling of their actual death. The Periactoi consisted of two pillars, one on each side of the stage, which could turn to change the background setting without need of stagehands [Ancient]. All of these were constructed of simple machines, such as pulleys, levers, and wheels, made from wood, rope, and metal. They were put to use in many famous plays.

The plays themselves were very similar to the modern musical. They had sing and dancing, sometimes accompanied by music. The cast was comprised of many actors, called "hypocrites", both professional and amateur. The main character, or protagonist, was usually played by a professional and often highly-famed actor specifically chosen by the playwright, although some playwrights would portray this character themselves. Like most present musicals, there was also a chorus. The chorus provided the mood of the play by singing and dancing. Generally the lead chorus member was a professional dancer and singer, and the rest of the chorus was made up of amateurs. All the actors were men, as women were forbidden to appear on stage. The actors wore masks when portraying a woman or animal. These masks were built from wood, cloth, and clay, sometimes covered in animal or even human hair. The holes for the eyes were very small, but the opening for the mouth was large to allow the actor's voice to resonate more easily . The actors were sometimes required to wear wooden platform shoes, or kothomoi, in order to appear taller. Actors would also use optical illusions to seem taller or shorter. Vertical stripes were worn to appear taller and horizontal stripes to appear shorter.

Greek plays generally fell into one of two categories: comedy or tragedy. Other than in satirical plays, these categories would never mix. The modern symbol of drama, a smiling comedic mask and a weeping tragic mask, stems from these categories. These different types of plays varied greatly, especially in their topic. Comedy plays included base, vulgar humor. Comedy plays were humorous representations of peasant life and values. They encouraged tradition and criticized what they considered immorality. They were generally far more popular with the lower class, as they joked about topics that the upper class would have been unable to relate to. They were considered by the Greeks to be the easiest to write and perform. Costumes for comedic plays usually depended on the characters of the play. As many of these plays were about animals, so were the costumes. The actors' masks were exaggerated and grotesque, suggesting that the audience should not take them too seriously. The most notable comedic playwright was Aristophanes, and his major plays include The Frogs and Lysistrata.

Tragedy plays were not sad or depressing, but they were about more serious subjects than the comedic plays. Instead of a chaotic, meandering plot, tragic plays had a set rhythm and pattern to them. They also excluded vulgarity, tending not to offend their viewers. Tragedy plays explored the depth of human emotion and character. They were famous for their ability to cause the audience to relate to each character in a more empathetic way. They were more sophisticated and suited to the upper class than their humorous counterpart. Costumes were generally everyday clothing, if somewhat nicer and more elaborate. Notable playwrights of the genre included Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus. Prometheus Bound, Oedipus the King, and Medea are prime examples of tragic plays.

Satirical plays emerged as a compromise to the two categories. These plays dealt with the same topics and ideas of a tragic play, but presented them in a comical manner. The actors mocked the clichés and styles of a tragedy, and were often exaggerated in their mannerisms. These were popular with both the upper and lower classes, and were known for being very witty, a trait the Greeks admired greatly. They were generally as amusing as comedic plays, but not as rude and offensive. Cyclops, written by the poet Euripides, and The Scouts by Sophocles are the only known existing satire plays [Ancient]. Historians know of their existence in ancient Greece from other archaeological sources. Satire plays were considered the most difficult, for both the actors and playwrights. In competitions, a playwright would often submit a satire play to prove his worth, as well as their usual comic or tragic plays. They were also mush shorter than the other plays, usually only half as long as a tragedy.

Greek plays were inextricably tied to the gods. Before each play, a sacrifice would be made to Dionysus, to whom theatre really owes its beginning. Apollo was also important. As the god of music and poetry, Apollo was especially honored by actors and playwrights. Equally important to the theatre were the Muses. The muses were the 9 goddesses of the arts. Terpsichore, Euterpe, Calliope, Thalia, and Melpomene were the most significant to the theatre. Terpsichore and Euterpe personified dance and music respectively, both key elements of Greek theatre. Calliope embodied epic poetry, which was usually the basis of most plays. Thalia and Melpomene represented the two categories of theatre, comedy and tragedy.

The Greeks have given much to our modern world through theatre. Every actor, of course, owes his or her livelihood to the Greeks' innovative thinking. Many Greek plays still exist today, preserving the culture and traditions of their time. The basics of many modern machines come from the Aeorema, the Ekeclema, and the Periactoi, all machines created specifically for theatre productions. The Greeks have also provided the fundamentals of theatre. We still use stages, costumes, and make-up in acting today. We still have comedy, tragedy, and satire, although often combined, in present movies, television shows, and dramatic performances. Many theaters are modeled after Greek amphitheaters, in order to achieve their nearly flawless acoustics.

No doubt exists, however, that Greek theatre has affected our society in deeper ways as well. Since the beginning of history, stories have been used to pass on values, such as integrity, bravery, and respect. Theatre continues today to bring life to these stories, forever imprinting itself into the minds and consciences of its audience. Each person can empathize with and relate to the characters, gaining insight to their own plights and personalities. Theatre also probes deep inside the heart of humanity, for the actors as well as the audience, as if through becoming another person, you learn more about

yourself. Without theatre, culture as we know it could not exist. It has been changed permanently through theatre. A simple tradition of the Greeks has become a vital part of our identity as human beings.

Sophocles; 496-406 B.C

Sophocles, the son of a wealthy arms manufacturer, was born probably in 496 B.C.E. in the deme Colonus near Athens. Of all the ancient playwrights, he scored the most wins in dramatic competitions, and won the most important dramatic festival, the City Dionysia, an unmatched 18 times. He received an education in music, athletics, and dancing, and as a boy of fifteen was chosen to lead the paean (hymn of praise) sung by the chorus of boys after the victory of Salamis. Like most of the ancient playwrights, he acted in the plays he wrote. He showed his musical skill in public, when he played the blind singer Thamyris in his drama of the same name, and played the cithara with such success that he was painted as Thamyris with the cithara in the famous Stoa Poecile ("painted colonnade"), a prominent gathering place in ancient Athens. Sophocles was also involved in Athenian political and military affairs. Owing to his practical gifts with language he was involved in negotiations with the allies of Chios and Samos. During the Peloponnesian War he was one of the generals. In 435 B.C., fulfilling the office of Hellenotamias, he was at the head of the management of the treasure of the allies, which was kept on the Acropolis; and in 413 B.C., when the question arose of giving to the state an oligarchical constitution, he was on the commission of preliminary investigation. He also filled a priestly office.

The charm and the refinement of his character seem to have won him many friends. Among them was the historian Herodotus. He was also deemed by antiquity as a man especially beloved by the gods, particularly by Asclepius, god of medicine, whose priest he probably was, and who was said to have granted him health and vigor of mind to extreme old age. By the Athenian Nicostrate he had a son, Iophon, who won some repute as a tragic poet, and by Theoris of Sicyon another son, Ariston, father of another Sophocles who gained fame for himself by writing tragedies of his own, and afterwards by the production of his grandfather's dramas. There was a legend that a quarrel arose between Sophocles and his son Iophon, on account of his preference for this grandson, and that, when summoned by Iophon before the court as weak in mind and unable to manage his affairs, he obtained his own absolute acquittal by reading the chorus on his native place in the Oedipus Coloneus. The tales of his death, in 405 B.C., are also mythical. According to one account, he was choked by a grape. According to others, he died either when publicly reciting the Antigone, or from excessive joy at some dramatic victory. The only fact unanimously attested by his contemporaries is that his death was as dignified as his life. We are also told that the god Dionysus, by repeated apparitions in dreams, prompted the general of the Spartans, who were then attacking Athens, to grant a truce in order to bury the poet in the family grave outside the city. On his tomb stood a Siren as a symbol of the charm of poetry. After his death the Athenians worshipped him as a hero and offered an annual sacrifice in his memory. In later times, on the proposal of the orator Lycurgus, a bronze statue was erected to him, together with Aeschylus and Euripides, in the theatre, and an authorized and standard copy of his dramas was made to preserve them.

Even in his lifetime, and indeed through the whole of antiquity, he was held to be the most perfect of tragedians; one of the ancient writers calls him the "pupil of Homer". If Aeschylus is the creator of Greek tragedy, it was Sophocles who brought it to perfection. He extended the dramatic action (1) by the introduction of a third actor, so that three people could be on stage in addition to the chorus, while in his last pieces he even added a fourth; and (2) by a due subordination of the chorus, to which, however, he gave a more artistic development, while he increased its numbers from twelve to fifteen persons. These moves made dialogue all the more important. He also perfected the costumes and decoration. But Sophocles' great mastery of his art appears, above all, in the clearness with which he portrays his characters, which are developed with a scrupulous attention to details, and in which he is not satisfied, like Aeschylus, with mere outlines, nor, as Euripides often did, with copies from common life. His heroes, too, are ideal figures, like those of Aeschylus. While they lack the superhuman loftiness of Aeschylus' creations, they have a certain ideal truth of their own. In contrast to Euripides, Sophocles, like Aeschylus, is profoundly religious, and the attitude which he adopts towards popular religion is marked by an instinctive reverence. The grace peculiar to Sophocles' nature makes itself felt in his language, the charm of which was universally praised by the ancients. With his noble simplicity he takes in this respect also a middle place between the weightiness and boldness of the language of Aeschylus, and the smoothness and rhetorical embellishment which distinguish that of Euripides.

Sophocles was a very prolific poet. The number of his plays is given as between 123 and 130, of which above 100 are known to us by their titles and by fragments. Only seven have been preserved complete: The Trachinice (so named from the chorus, and its treating of the death of Heracles), the Ajax, the Philoctetes, the Electra, the Oedipus Tyrannus, the Oedipus at Colonus, and the Antigone. The last-mentioned play was produced in the spring of 440 B.C.; the Philoctetes in 410 B.C.; the Oedipus at Colonus was not put on the stage until 401 B.C., after his death, by his grandson Sophocles. Besides tragedies, Sophocles composed paeans, elegies, epigrams, and a work in prose on the chorus.

The Greek Theatre : Evolution and Influence

Without a doubt, the Greek theatre remains one of the most recognized and distinctive buildings in the world. While we associate many features of modern theatres with their Greek counterparts, the ancient theatre was a very different animal. The size, shape, and functions of the various pieces, though analogous to the modern theatre, were quite different in ancient times. The Greek theatre evolved to fit the changing specifications of tragedy, eventually into the form that survives at hundreds of sites around the Mediterranean. At the same time, the overarching simplicity of the Greek theatre, despite the many changes, demanded certain features of the tragedies. As tragedy evolved from choral songs to works such as Oedipus the King, a unique, reciprocal relationship developed with the theatre.

The earliest Greek theatres recall tragedy's origins in choral songs sung to local heroes and divinities. Choral songs were an early Greek performative art, in which a large group of people, the chorus (in Greek, literally = "dance"), would dance and sing raucous songs in honour of a god. Choral performances in honour of the god Dionysus evolved into what we know as tragedy, an enduring art form that the Greeks invented in the 6th

c. B.C.E. These performances took place in a large, circular orchestra, or dancing area, in which the chorus performed. The orchestra was simply a flattened patch of earth, unpaved, and delimited by a rim of large stones. At the centre of the orchestra, stood an altar to Dionysus, the patron god of tragedy. The chorus did not use the altar per se during performance; instead, the altar acted as a focal point around which the chorus danced and sang. A simple, undecorated wooden tent, or skene, stood behind the orchestra and provided a place for the chorus to store instruments or other props needed during the dance. Audiences began to attend these performances, and orchestras started to be built against hillsides. The rising earth formed a natural seating area, a theatre (in Greek = "watching place"), from which spectators could view the performances.

These choral songs evolved into tragedy with the addition of actors. The actors, naturally, needed some way to physically separate themselves from the chorus and the orchestra. The small tent gave way to larger wooden buildings. These new and improved skene provided a degree of separation for the actors, as well as doors through which the actors could enter and exit. These wooden platforms, though still temporary, were painted with architectural features; though our word "scene" comes from the Greek skene, these paintings were purely decorative and in no way influenced the tragedy or its content. During this time, other areas of the theatre became more defined. First, the orchestra was sunk just below the level of the audience, thus formalizing the stone rim; the orchestra was also paved with large, flat stones. Second, rows of wooden seats were built on the hillside. These benches wrapped more than halfway around the orchestra and began the Greek theatre’s distinctive architectural form.

Over time, the actors supplanted the chorus as the dominant characters in tragedy, and theatre design reflected this important shift. The skene evolved again, this time into a complex and permanent stone structure. This generation of skene allowed the actors to perform on stage level as well on the roof. The building became large and sturdy to accommodate the various machines that became popular in tragic performances; such skene were also higher and elaborately decorated with sculpture and architectural features. The new tragic pattern also had ramifications for the orchestra. As the prominence of the chorus diminished, the orchestra got smaller and smaller; late Greek and Roman theatres often reduced the orchestra to a semi-circle. Further modifications came to the audience: Stone seating replaced the wooden benches, and large walkways partitioned the seats for easy access.

Even in its later form, the Greek theatre remained starkly simple, and this heavily influenced the tragedies' performance. First, the Greek theatres were much larger than their modern counterparts, and some theatres held over 14,000 spectators. On these grand scales, actors' tools for communication with the audience were entirely different than modern ones. Body language, facial gestures, and vocal tones, though very effective in a small, modern theatre, would have been lost in the sheer size of an ancient one. Instead, the actor wore a huge tragic mask to roughly depict his state of mind and relied on his speech to do the rest. Lengthy monologues were the only means available for character development. These passages contrast with modern drama, but in ancient times were entirely necessary. Second, the theatre provided no special effects, save a crane in the skene capable of raising and lowering characters onto the stage. Lighting, background changes, curtains, and sounds - the staple special effects in modern dramatic performance - were unavailable to the Greeks. Instead, all "special effects" had to be done through the script. Murder, sex, natural disasters, suicide, and battles all took

place offstage; messengers then reported the results. Given the practical constraints, this was the only sensible way of doing business. Modern readers often desire to "see" these important actions, as they are often the critical points in the tragedy. They take place off-stage not because of incompetence, but because of the limitations of the theatre.

Greek tragedy and the Greek theatre influenced each other in such a way that the discussion of one necessarily involves the other. As Greek tragedy developed from hymns of praise to local gods to the complex works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the theatre adapted accordingly. All the while, the theatre remained an essentially simple building and affected the way the tragic poets developed their works. In the end, the distinctive features of Greek tragedy and the Greek theatre resulted from the interaction between the two.

Oedipus: The Greek Period

The Greek period, in the fourth and fifth centuries of B.C., evolved from a small city called Athens, Europe. In this era, a sweep of talent and creativity placed a historical advance on theatre that will dominate for years to come. This spirit most likely emerged from the defeat of the Persian Empire, along with the sense of freedom and expression from the Athenian democracy. Four great writers derived from this ancient astonishment. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were three writers of tragedy, whereas Aristophanes was a famous comic dramatist. From these original works came the play festivals using masks and boots to accommodate for the size of the Greek theatre. These tragedies the Athenians went to see consisted of five episodes, and one in particular, Oedipus the King, is made up of five choral odes, featuring the mystery behind the riddle of the sphinx. The dithyrambs were a beginning stage or rough draft of what the plays would soon come to be. Dionysis is the name of a theatre where people like Thespis and other Greek actors performed, using the three unities to keep the audience’s attention alarmed and suspense building.

Aeschylus was the first of the tragedy writers. He took the theatres origins and focused less on reciting patterns, dealing more with the presentation of action. Born under tyranny, he grew up during the period in which the Persian Empire was attempting to conquer Athens. Aeschylus was born in 525 B.C. His youth was most likely spent in the city of Pallene with his father, Euphorion, and his brother. It was a repressive time, under the rule of Peisistratus.

The play festivals at which these writers competed were at “City Dionysia” and the Lenaea. The “City Dionysia” was held at the end of March. The people of Athens put on a folk festival at which they would boast of their success, theatrically and politically, to all the prosperous men visiting from outside the state. This festival consumed all of six days, the second day full of dancing and singing, following the previous day of comedies. Then came three days of tragedy performances within the competition of five authors. The second celebration, Lenaea, at the end of January is the older of the two. It started off as a wine festival and gradually included play contests. These contests mainly used comedies to entertain them.

In these productions, masks and boots were the eye-catching features of their wardrobe. The masks attracted attention to their dramatic expressions. This allowed the emotions to be conveyed to the spectators farthest away. The masks, made of linen cork and wood, could be changed by the three actors whom had speaking parts. Therefore, these actors could play many parts. The hole in the mask, disguised as a mouth, is used as a sounding board to project the voice of the actor.

The boots had high painted soles, and while accompanied with a tall headdress, created the effect of a change in height. This change could be even more than one and a half feet. Larger than life, the height was proportioned with bright colours, extravagant padded costumes, and lent colour. Although, the unstableness of the boot created a hazard in walking, it gave a great addition to the intensity of the theatre.

The stage of the open-aired Greek theatre of the fifth century B.C. was surrounded by a seating capacity of fourteen thousand. The marble benches arranged around the circular stage known as the eccyclema, a form of wagon- stage. Behind the dancing floor was the stage building with doors and maybe even columns. This setting would represent a palace or temple which would be the main setting of action. This is also were the actors make their entrance. There was a lack of curtains and lighting and only a few props were used. The gods in the play were sometimes lifted in by cranes while other times they performed on a special platform.

In the Greek tragedies there is a basic outline that the authors followed consisting of five episodes with choral odes between them. **Prologos**, was the first scene which was an introduction. **Episode**, is the second scene which is dramatic one. **Parodos**, was the third scene, served as an entrance lyric by the chorus. **Stasimon** is a choral ode, and the fifth **Exodos** delivers the parting lines by the chorus and leaves the orchestra.

The choral odes in Oedipus the King is a good example of how the chorus was used to create a reaction from the audience. The first choral ode was a prayer to the gods, which reveals the reality of the plague as seen through the eyes of the people as a whole. The second reflects the reactions from the accusations and counteraccusations of Oedipus and Tiresias. The third deals with the truth or falsity of the divine prophecy. The fourth shows the chorus in a mode of feverish excitement dealing with the secret birth of Oedipus. The last deals with the fate of Oedipus.

These tragedies started off as Dithyrambs which formed from myths to stories that were translated into words of song in addition to physical movement. They were the first step toward a literary drama with both tragedy and comedy. These plays were demonstrated at the city of Dionysus featuring Greek actors such as Thespis.

The plays consisted of three unities, the unity of action, time and place. The all united to form a whole with a 'certain degree of magnitude' according to Aristotle. They were part of a trilogy.

The Greek theatre was an extravagant event that allowed the people of the city of Athens to release their magic upon the world. They changed the theatre and that change will last for many years to come. They set a standard for comedy and tragedy that will entertain and influence people forever.

Oedipus Myth

The King of Thebes was Laius, a descendant of Cadmus, and an oracle predicted, before the birth of his son that this son would one day be his father's murderer. When born, Laius (and, in some versions of the myth, Jocasta, Oedipus' mother and Laius' wife) gives the child to a herdsman and orders him to take him out beyond the city and kill him. Out of pity for the child, the herdsman gave the baby to another herdsman, tying his feet together and wounding them (in some versions, Laius pierces Oedipus' feet and exposes him to die, where the herdsman finds him by chance). This herdsman took the baby to Polybus, King of Corinth, who adopted him as his own son.

Oedipus, now fully grown, is told that he is not the son of Polybus, and seeks help from an oracle, who tells him he is destined to kill his father and sleep with his mother. Oedipus – presumably still thinking that Polybus is his father – flees from Corinth to Thebes in an attempt to escape the fate the oracle has predicted for him. As he is travelling, he gets involved in a dispute at a crossroads with a man in a chariot (Laius, his birth father) – and kills him.

As he approaches Thebes, Oedipus is approached by the Sphinx, who proposes her famous riddle: 'What walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon, and three at night?' – the answer is man, who crawls, walks upright, and in his age, walks with a stick. The Sphinx, who has been plaguing Thebes, is defeated – Oedipus has solved the riddle that no Athenian could solve. In gratitude, the Thebans appoint Oedipus the king of Thebes (in Laius' place) and reward him with the dead king's wife, Jocasta, his birth mother. Oedipus and Jocasta have four children: two daughters (Electra and Ismene) and two sons (Polyneices and Eteocles).

At this point, Sophocles' play begins. Years later, a plague strikes Thebes, and Oedipus as King promises to end it. He sends Creon, Jocasta's brother, to the Delphic Oracle to seek guidance and is told that the murderer of Laius must be found and either killed or exiled (depending, again, on which version you read). As he begins to search for the killer, he encounters (or sends for) Tiresias, who tells him that he is the killer of Laius and warns him that he will only be seeking out himself. Oedipus ignores this advice.

A messenger arrives from Corinth giving Oedipus the news that Polybus is dead, and it seems the oracle's prophecy for Oedipus has failed to come true. The herdsman who delivered him to Corinth then appears and informs Oedipus that he is an adopted baby. Jocasta, hearing this, realizes what has happened and kills herself. Oedipus seeks out the herdsman initially ordered to murder him as a baby, and learns that the infant raised by Polybus and Merope (his wife) was in fact the son of Laius and Jocasta. He finally realizes that, at the crossroads, he killed his father, and is married to his own mother. Notably in Sophocles' play, the Corinthian Messenger is also the first herdsman: a small, but concise tweak.

Oedipus finds Jocasta dead, and blinds himself. He then (in Sophocles) leaves the city, and with his daughter Antigone as his guide, wanders blindly through the country, dying finally at Colonous. Some versions of the story have Oedipus commit suicide in Thebes, rather than leave or be exiled.

Oedipus Rex : Summary

Oedipus Rex unfolds as a murder mystery, a political thriller, and a psychological whodunit. Throughout this mythic story of parricide and incest, Sophocles emphasizes the irony of a man determined to track down, expose, and punish an assassin, who turns out to be himself.

When the play opens, Thebes is suffering a plague which leaves its fields and women barren. Oedipus, the king of Thebes, has sent his brother-in-law, Creon, to the house of Apollo to ask the oracle how to end the plague. Creon returns, bearing good news: once

the killer of the previous king, Laius, is found, Thebes will be cured of the plague (Laius was Jocasta's husband before she married Oedipus). Hearing this, Oedipus swears he will find the murderer and banish him. The Chorus (representing the people of Thebes) suggests that Oedipus consult Tiresias, the blind prophet. Oedipus tells them that he has already sent for Tiresias.

When Tiresias arrives, he seems reluctant to answer Oedipus's questions, warning him that he does not want to know the answers. Oedipus threatens him with death, and finally Tiresias tells him that Oedipus himself is the killer, and that his marriage is a sinful union. Oedipus takes this as an insult and jumps to the conclusion that Creon paid Tiresias to say these things. Furious, Oedipus dismisses him, and Tiresias goes, repeating as he does, that Laius's killer is right here before him - a man who is his father's killer and his mother's husband, a man who came seeing but will leave in blindness.

Creon enters, asking the people around him if it is true that Oedipus slanderously accused him. The Chorus tries to mediate, but Oedipus appears and charges Creon with treason. Jocasta and the Chorus beg Oedipus to be open-minded: Oedipus unwillingly relents and allows Creon to go. Jocasta asks Oedipus why he is so upset and he tells her what Tiresias prophesied. Jocasta comforts him by telling him that there is no truth in oracles or prophets, and she has proof. Long ago an oracle told Laius that his own son would kill him, and as a result he and Jocasta gave their infant son to a shepherd to leave out on a hillside to die with a pin through its ankles. Yet Laius was killed by robbers, not by his own son, proof that the oracle was wrong. But something about her story troubles Oedipus; she said that Laius was killed at a place where three roads meet, and this reminds Oedipus of an incident from his past, when he killed a stranger at a place where three roads met. He asks her to describe Laius, and her description matches his memory. Yet Jocasta tells him that the only eyewitness to Laius's death, a herdsman, swore that five robbers killed him. Oedipus summons this witness.

While they wait for the man to arrive, Jocasta asks Oedipus why he seems so troubled. Oedipus tells her the story of his past. Once when he was young, a man he met told him that he was not his father's son. He asked his parents about it, and they denied it. Still it troubled him, and he eventually went to an oracle to determine his true lineage. The oracle then told him that he would kill his father and marry his mother. This prophecy so frightened Oedipus that he left his hometown and never returned. On his journey, he encountered a haughty man at a crossroads - and killed the man after suffering an insult. Oedipus is afraid that the stranger he killed might have been Laius. If this is the case, Oedipus will be forever banished both from Thebes (the punishment he swore for the killer of Laius) and from Corinth, his hometown. If this eyewitness will swear that robbers killed Laius, then Oedipus is exonerated. He prays for the witness to deliver him from guilt and from banishment. Oedipus and Jocasta enter the palace to wait for him.

Jocasta comes back out of the palace, on her way to the holy temples to pray for Oedipus. A messenger arrives from Corinth with the news that Oedipus's father Polybus is dead. Overjoyed, Jocasta sends for Oedipus, glad that she has even more proof in the uselessness of oracles. Oedipus rejoices, but then states that he is still afraid of the rest of the oracle's prophecy: that he will marry his mother. The messenger assures him that he need not fear approaching Corinth - since Merope, his mother, is not really his mother, and moreover, Polybus wasn't his father either. Stunned, Oedipus asks him how

he came to know this. The messenger replies that years ago a man gave a baby to him and he delivered this baby to the king and queen of Corinth - a baby that would grow up to be Oedipus the King. The injury to Oedipus's ankles is a testament to the truth of his tale, because the baby's feet had been pierced through the ankles. Oedipus asks the messenger who gave the baby to him, and he replies that it was one of Laius's servants. Oedipus sends his men out to find this servant. The messenger suggests that Jocasta should be able to help identify the servant and help unveil the true story of Oedipus's birth. Suddenly understanding the terrible truth, Jocasta begs Oedipus not to carry through with his investigation. Oedipus replies that he swore to unravel this mystery, and he will follow through on his word. Jocasta exits into the palace.

Oedipus again swears that he will figure out this secret, no matter how vile the answer is. The Chorus senses that something bad is about to happen and join Jocasta's cry in begging the mystery to be left unresolved. Oedipus's men lead in an old shepherd, who is afraid to answer Oedipus's questions. But finally he tells Oedipus the truth. He did in fact give the messenger a baby boy, and that baby boy was Laius's son - the same son that Jocasta and Laius left on a hillside to die because of the oracle's prophecy.

Finally the truth is clear - devastated, Oedipus exits into the palace. A messenger reveals that he grabbed a sword and searched for Jocasta with the intent to kill her. Upon entering her chamber, however, he finds that she has hanged herself. He takes the gold brooches from her dress and gouges his eyes out. He appears onstage again, blood streaming from his now blind eyes. He cries out that he, who has seen and done such vile things, shall never see again. He begs the Chorus to kill him. Creon enters, having heard the entire story, and begs Oedipus to come inside, where he will not be seen. Oedipus begs him to let him leave the city, and Creon tells him that he must consult Apollo first. Oedipus tells him that banishment was the punishment he declared for Laius's killer, and Creon agrees with him. Before he leaves forever, however, Oedipus asks to see his daughters and begs Creon to take care of them. Oedipus is then led away, while Creon and the girls go back in the palace. The Chorus, alone, laments Oedipus' tragic fate and his doomed lineage.

Oedipus Rex : Major Themes

In the play Oedipus Rex , by Sophocles, two themes appear; one that humans have little control of their lives because fate always catches up with them and the theme that when someone makes a mistake, they will have to pay for it.

The theme that the **lives of humans are controlled by the gods**, in Oedipus, show that everything humans do are futile and result in no gain but only loss. This theme is mainly shown by the character Oedipus, king of Thebes. In the beginning of his life, Laius the king planned to kill his son by leaving him on Mount Cithaeron to die. "...at the moment I was your savior."

From the very beginning, Oedipus was destined to fulfill Apollo's prophecy of killing his father. Even though King Lauis tries to kill Oedipus to stop the fulfillment of this shameful prophecy, fate drives the Corinthian messenger to save Oedipus. What the gods fortell will come true and no human can stop it from happening, not even the kings. Oedipus is once again controlled by this power when he leaves the place of his child hood

after he hears that he is to kill his father and marry his mother. "I shall shrink from nothing...to find the murderer of Laius...You are the murderer..." Oedipus tried to stop the prophecy from coming true by leaving Corinth and only fate can make Oedipus turn to the road where he kills his true father. Leaving Corinth makes Oedipus lose his childhood by making him worry of such issues young people should not have to worry about and becoming a king of a strange land. Last of all, Oedipus carries the last part of the prophecy out, marrying his mother. "I would... never have been known as my mother's husband. Oedipus has no control over the outcome of his life. Fate causes Oedipus to have known the answer to the Sphinx's riddle and win his marriage to his mother, Jocasta. Had fate not intervened, the chances of marrying Jocasta would have been small since there is an enormous number of people and places to go. Oedipus loses his sense of dignity after he discovers he is not only a murderer, but also that he had committed incest. From his birth to the end of the play, fate intervenes when Oedipus is saved from Laius' wrath as a baby, when Oedipus goes to the fork in the road where he kills his father, and lastly, when he answers the Sphinx's riddle and marries Jocasta.

The second theme, **mistakes and wrongs toward other people will be paid**, for is told by Tiresias, the prophet, and carried out by Jocasta, and once again, King Oedipus. Tiresias states, after being accused of being a fool and mocked by Oedipus, "These reproaches you fling at me, all these people here will fling them at you..." Tiresias realizes that mockery and false accusations will not go unpaid forever. This foreshadows the mockery Oedipus will experience after the truth to his marriage is discovered; these people will jeer at him. Jocasta makes a detrimental mistake when she marries Oedipus. She even says, "...he had more or less the same build as you." Jocasta ignores all the obvious features between Laius and Oedipus because she was so in love. If she had taken notice of these things, her pain would be more endurable because Oedipus would not know that the prophecy was being fulfilled. Lastly, King Oedipus made a mistake losing his temper when he meets King Laius. "The driver tried to push me off the road...he aimed at my head with a two-pronged goad, and hit me. I paid him back in full...I killed the whole lot of them." Oedipus wronged Laius here by killing him over a small incident and fit of anger. Had Oedipus not killed Laius, the murderer of would not have to be searched out and ultimately, the truth about his marriage to his mother would not be told and the kingdom would continue to thrive along with the family happiness. The statement by Tiresias and the mistakes of the royal family, show that the mistakes and insults toward others will be returned to that person who has wronged the other.

Oedipus Rex : Critical Concepts

Light and darkness: - Darkness and light are tightly wound up with the theme of sight and blindness in Sophocles' play. Oedipus - and all the other characters, save for Tiresias - is 'in the dark' about his own origins and the murder of Laius. Tiresias, of course, is literally 'in the dark' with his own blindness - and yet manages to have sight over everything that is to follow. After Oedipus finds out what has happened, he bemoans the way everything has indeed "come to light".

Sight and blindness: - Tiresias holds the key to the link between sight and blindness - for even though he is blind, he can still see and predict the future (if not the present). At the end of the play, moreover, Oedipus blinds himself, because what he has

metaphorically seen (i.e. realized) leaves him unable to face his family or his parents in the afterlife). As with the previous theme, sight/blindness operate both literally and metaphorically within the play. Indeed, literal sight is juxtaposed with 'insight' or 'foresight'.

Origins and children: - Oedipus embarks upon a search for his own origins, and - though he does not realize it - for his real parents. As the child of his own wife, and thus father and brother to his children, Sophocles explores various interrelationships between where things began and who fathered who. Similarly, the play itself works backwards towards a revelatory start: the story has, in effect, already happened - and Oedipus is forced to discover his own history.

The One and the Many (also Doubles/Twos): - Throughout the play, a central inconsistency dominates - namely the herdsman and Jocasta both believe Laius to have been killed by several people at the crossroads. The story, however, reveals that Oedipus himself alone killed Laius. How can Laius have been supposedly killed by one person – and also by many people?

Oedipus is searching for Laius' murderer: he is the detective seeking the criminal. Yet in the end, these two roles merge into one person – Oedipus himself. The Oedipus we are left with at the end of the play is similarly both father and brother. Sophocles' play, in fact, abounds with twos and doubles: there are two herdsmen, two daughters and two sons, two opposed pairs of king and queen (Laius and Jocasta, and Polybus and Merope), and two cities (Thebes and Corinth). In so many of these cases, Oedipus' realization is that he is either between – or, more confusingly, some combination of – two things. Thus the conflict between "the one and the many" is central to Sophocles' play. "What is this news of double meaning?" Jocasta asks (939). Throughout Oedipus, then, it remains a pertinent question.

Plague and health: - Thebes at the start of the play is suffering from terrible blight which renders the fields and the women barren. The oracle tells Oedipus at the start of the play that the source of this plague is Laius' murderer (Oedipus himself). Health then, only comes with the end of the play and Oedipus' blindness. Again, 'plague' is both literal and metaphorical. There is a genuine plague, but also, to quote Hamlet, there might be "something rotten" in the moral state of Thebes.

Prophecy, oracles, and predestination: - The origins of this play in the Oedipus myth (see 'Oedipus and Myth') create a compelling question about foreknowledge and expectation. The audience who knew the myth would know from the start far more than Oedipus himself - hence a strong example of dramatic irony. Moreover, one of the themes the play considers as a corollary is whether or not you can escape your fate. In trying to murder her son, Jocasta finds him reborn as her husband. Running from Corinth, from his parents, Oedipus murders his father on the way. It seems that running away from one's fate ultimately ensures that one is only running towards it.

Youth and age: - 'Man' is the answer to the Sphinx's question, and the aging of man is given key significance in the course of the play. Oedipus himself goes from childlike innocence to a blinded man who needs to be led by his children. Oedipus, it might be said, ages with the discovery of his own shortcomings as a man. In learning of his own weaknesses and frailties, he loses his innocence immediately.

Oedipus Rex as an Aristotelian Tragedy

The fifth century B is the golden age of Greek dramas. During that period, Sophocles wrote an outstanding tragedy named Oedipus Rex. Over the centuries, Oedipus Rex has been regarded as the Greek tragedy par excellence. In the Poetics, Aristotle listed many requirements of a successful tragedy. Oedipus Rex is Aristotle's ideal tragedy because it fulfills so many requirements for a successful tragedy.

To begin with, Aristotle believes that "the first and most important part" of his ideal tragedy is **plot**. He requires the plot of a tragedy to be single and complex, which means there should be only one plot that includes peripeteia and anagnorsis. Additionally, all plots should have pathos. It is obvious that all those requirements are satisfied in Oedipus Rex. Peripeteia, which means reversal, occurs when Oedipus hears the news of Polybus's death. The news first sounds good, but reverses to be a disaster in a moment. Anagnorisis means recognition, emerges in the story when Oedipus knows that he kills Laius. Oedipus kills his father in ignorance but learns the true relationship from a Theban people. Pathos means suffering. It is important for a successful tragedy because a destructive or painful act will earn the audience's sympathy. When Oedipus finally understands the truth, he is so suffering from it that he blinds himself. In all, Oedipus Rex meets all Aristotle's requirements of the plot of a tragedy.

The second important part of a successful tragedy, **characters** are required by Aristotle to be good, appropriate, true to life, and consistent. All characters in Oedipus Rex meet those requirements, and Jocasta is a perfect example. She is the queen of Thebe, and she commits suicide because she cannot bear the shame of the immoral truth.

Except fulfilling requirements of all characters, Oedipus Rex also meets the specialty of a **tragic hero**. The most important character in a tragedy is the tragic hero. Aristotle requires that this character should have an elevated status but imperfect, which means the character should be higher than common people but falls below. Oedipus, the king of Thebe, is absolutely high-ranking. However, he falls to the bottom when he recognizes that he kills his father and gets married to his mother. Oedipus might have left the plague to take its course, but pity for the sufferings of his people compelled him to find out the truth. He might have left the murder of Laius uninvestigated, but piety and justice required him to act. Tiresias, Jocasta the Theban people, each in turn tries to stop him, but in vain; he must read the last riddle, the riddle of his own life. What causes his ruin is his own strength and courage, his loyalty to Thebes, and his loyalty to the truth.

In addition, Aristotle also mentions in the Poetics that the **hamartia** of a tragic hero is very important for a good tragedy. The Greek term "hamartia" means "tragic flaw." The character's flaw must result from something that is also a central part of their virtue, which goes somewhat twisted. Aristotle indicates that a truly tragic hero must have a failing that is neither idiosyncratic nor arbitrary, but is somehow more deeply imbedded -- a kind of human failing and human weakness. It is obvious that Oedipus is a tragic hero with hamartia. His basic flaw is his lack of knowledge about his own identity. Moreover, no amount of foresight or pre-emptive action could remedy Oedipus' hamartia; unlike other tragic heroes, Oedipus bears no responsibility for his flaw. The audience fears for Oedipus because nothing he does can change the tragedy's outcome.

Another requirement Aristotle mentions in the Poetics is **catharsis**. Aristotle uses the term catharsis to refer to the purging of excessive emotions of a person. In Oedipus Rex, Sophocles perfectly evokes catharsis to make the story to its climax. By watching the tragedy and feeling the strong emotions of fear and pity on behalf of the characters on stage, audiences experience a kind of cleansing of the soul. So the catharsis from watching tragedy gave the spectators a shared experience that bound them closer together. The catharsis occurs at the end when Oedipus, driven by the guilt of the impermissibility of incest and the emptiness caused by the loss of his beloved mother, blinds himself.

Fulfilled so many requirements by Aristotle, it is obvious that Oedipus Rex is a perfect tragedy. It has a proper plot, characters, tragic hero, hamartia, and catharsis.

Oedipus : Aristotle's Tragic Hero

Sophocles' Oedipus is one of the most well-known and influential fictional figure in the history of literature primarily because of the fact that Oedipus symbolizes many things – as a hero, as a son, as a leader and as an example of the conflicting issues affecting morality. Oedipus is the ideal man to exemplify Aristotle's idea of the tragic hero based on several characteristics focused on the major flaw of Oedipus as an individual character and based on the actions Oedipus took that shaped his fortune and future.

There are several characteristics that define the tragic hero, as per Aristotle's understanding of the concept, and the life and characteristics of Sophocles' Oedipus fit perfectly in this framework. First, there is the idea of **evoking two important emotions**: **fear and pity**. The life of the tragic hero should make us feel fear as well as pity. The role of the hero is to represent the human nature and the innate weakness and futility of the human endeavor to counteract or go against the perceived path that destiny and the universe has set for an individual. These are two of the strongest characteristics of Oedipus and two of the most important facets of the overall story of Oedipus' life.

We **feel pity** over Oedipus because of what Oedipus has to go through, and how he was powerless to fight a prophecy because he feels that it is the moral thing to do. First, Oedipus, as a baby, was cursed to die in the forest because his father believed that if Oedipus lives, it is by his hands that King Laius would receive his end. There is reason to celebrate and be happy because Oedipus somehow managed to get out of the forest alive as he was discovered by chance by some peasant farmers who eventually ended up handing them over to the king and queen of Corinth. However, what was thought to be the start of a better life for Oedipus was actually the opposite. On the contrary, it will be the start of a life that would have a grim ending not only for Oedipus but also for his mother and father.

The **feeling of pity** continues as we witness how Oedipus **unknowingly slays** his father and then **marries his mother**, and it then becomes the **reason for his mother's intense feeling of guilt and confusion** that led he**r to kill herself**. Finally, the feeling of **pity ends with Oedipus making himself** blind and then **throwing** himself in **exile**. He allowed all of these things happen to him in pursuit of saving the lives of those whom he thought were his parents. Despite Oedipus' moral and righteous

goals, he nonetheless ends up doing what is wrong, illustrating the futility of the human being versus the power of destiny which is believed to be out of the control of human beings.

As we ponder about the life of Oedipus who becomes the symbol of the **inability** of a **human being** to **run away from his destiny**, and for that, we **feel fear**. He represents every human being. We feel fear because in our everyday lives, we make conscious choices and efforts in order to keep ourselves away from doing bad things or being subjected to bad experiences. We protect ourselves and do everything we can to be morally upright and to guarantee self-preservation. But Oedipus' life and the lessons from it will become a deeply ingrained realization upon us that we, like Oedipus, are after all helpless versus our destiny, especially once it is revealed to us.

Another important characteristic of the tragic hero is the **shift from a life of prosperity transforming towards the life of adversity**. When Oedipus was born, he has in his hands the prospect of a prosperous life being the son of the King and the Queen. But this prosperity turns to adversity as a result of the response of King Laius to the prophecy. When he was growing up in Corinth, again he was presented by a life of prosperity to which he turned his back against because he does not want to murder his own father and marry his own mother, leading to a path that will saw him murder his true father, marry his own mother who would soon take her own life while Oedipus makes himself blind and them puts himself in exile – clearly a life filled with adversity and not prosperity.

Another important aspect of a tragic hero as presented by Aristotle is the presence of both the **flaw** and **the state of being virtuous**. This puts the tragic hero in a balanced human form – there is the presence of innate good enough to inspire moral actions. There is also the tendency of the tragic hero to demonstrate his frailty or weakness which will result in his error. In the story, Oedipus is the epitome of the tragic hero because he is **virtuous**.

He was a good son to his surrogate (alternate) parents and his being **virtuous** was demonstrated in two important events in his life. The first one was during the time he discovered that he was doomed to kill his father. It broke his heart to leave his parents behind but he knew that even though this is a very painful step for him, this was the only way that he could keep the prophecy from becoming true, saving the life of his father and saving his mother from shame that will result in the marriage of a son to his own mother.

The other event which showed Oedipus innate characteristic of being **virtuous** is during the time he took it upon to punish his own self for his wrong doings. When he discovered his own crime and accepted his own shame, he was the one who took his very own eye sight, symbolizing how he was blinded and how his punishment means, not allowing him to visually enjoy life because of what he did. He also threw himself in exile as part of the punishment he himself embraced, knowing that this is the right and moral thing to do.

Despite these moral actions, Oedipus is not perfect. He is also **flawed** and is a man who is **characterized with errors**. One of his flaws is his **temper**. It is because of his **anger** that has led to his killing his father. Another flaw of Oedipus is his **belief that he is more powerful than destiny and fate**. He believed that he could change the course

of his life based on his own actions. This belief has sent him towards the path which he was trying to avoid. He believed that he can **outrun destiny** and change it over time, and this sense of overconfidence in what he can do doomed him. Had he been humble enough to allow destiny to reveal itself without any effort to change it, things would have been different. Anyone would risk doing anything and everything hoping that things turn out for the best.

Lastly, the most important aspect of the tragic hero is death. Tragedy pertains to a sad ending to a story or a life. The tragic hero's life is a tragedy not because of death. Every human being dies, but the **essence of tragedy** is **seen** in the **details leading towards** the death of the hero, a life characterized by misfortune that the tragic hero has to carry with him to his grave. This is a tragedy because even in his own death, Oedipus knew that there is nothing he can do to redeem himself from his sins. He is a hero because he tried to do the right thing but he only ends up doing the wrong things nonetheless. He was a tragic hero because while we praise him for his values, he is also forever stained by the reality that he can never be redeemed from his errors brought about by his flaws and weaknesses as a man who is powerless against the power of destiny and fate, which is a very significant ideal during the time of Sophocles.

Oedipus Rex: Hamartia

According to Aristotle, a tragic hero is a distinguished person occupying a high position or having a high status in life and in very prosperous circumstances falling into misfortune on account of a "hamartia" or some defect of character. He should be good or fine man though not perfect. There is nothing to arouse the feelings of pity or fear in seeing a bad character pass from prosperity into misfortune while the ruin of a man who represents near-perfection in the moral sense is repugnant and horrible. The tragic hero is neither a moral paragon nor a scoundrel. He should be true to type, and consistent or true to himself. Aristotle would attribute disaster or catastrophe in a tragedy to an error rather than a deliberate crime.

The main requirements of Aristotle in regard to the tragic hero are thus (1) **high social standing**, (2) **moral excellence or goodness**, and (3) **some fault of character**, or **error committed by the hero in ignorance**. Oedipus answers to all these requirements. Oedipus is a man of royal birth; he is brought up by a King and a Queen and he himself afterwards becomes a King and marries a Queen. He is thus a man of social eminence and possessing excellent qualities of character, though his is by no means perfect. We cannot say that his misfortune is due to any defect in his character, though his defects do produce the impression that such a man must pay for his defects. It would be wrong to say that he is a puppet in the hands of fate. Within certain limits he is a free agent, though it must be recognized that the prophecy of the oracle would yet have been fulfilled.

Oedipus is a **good king**, a great well-wisher of his people, a man of integrity, an honest and great administrator and an outstanding intellect. He is a pious man who believes in oracles, respects the bonds of family, and hates impurity. His belief in the prophecies of gods is the very basis of the whole play. The suppliant people approach him almost as a god and he is honoured as a saviour. When Creon reveals the cause of the city's suffering, Oedipus declares his resolve to track down the criminal and he utters a terrible

curse upon him. We can say that Oedipus is almost an ideal King. He also shows himself as a devoted husband and a loving father. He shows due consideration for the opinions and feelings of Jocasta and he lavishes all his affection on his daughters. His relations with the Chorus are also very cordial and he shows all due courtesy to them. In short both as a man and as a king Oedipus is worthy of high respect.

However, Oedipus has his faults. He is **hot-tempered**, **hasty in his judgment, proud of his intelligence, and random in his decisions**. He quickly loses his temper when he finds the prophet reluctant to reveal the things that he knows. He jumps to the conclusion that Tiresias and Creon have hatched a conspiracy against him. This attitude of distrust towards the prophet is in sharp contrast to Oedipus's genuine piety. Oedipus belongs to the world of politics and human standards rather than to the divine order of the world. His piety fails also later on when, under the influence of Jocasta, he becomes somewhat skeptical regarding the oracle.

An outstanding feature of Oedipus's character is an **inherent feeling of pride in his own wisdom**. Because of this arrogance, Oedipus certainly alienates some of our sympathy. When self-confidence takes the form of pride, haughtiness, arrogance or insolence, it becomes disgusting and obnoxious. His attitude of intolerance towards both Tiresias and Creon and his highly offensive and insulting words to both of them create in us the impression that he is paving the way for his own downfall. Of course, Oedipus has already committed the crimes which make him a sinner in the eyes of the god, in his own eyes, and in the eyes of other people. But the tragedy lay in discovery that he is guilty of them. If the crimes had remained unknown there would hardly have been any tragedy. Tragedy comes with the fact for discovery both for Jocasta and himself.

It would be a flaw in the logic to say that Oedipus suffers because of his sin of pride, but his pride is not the direct cause of his tragedy. He tried to avoid the fulfillment of the prophecies made by oracle. He killed his father and married his mother. His tragedy is a tragedy of error. If he had been a little more careful, things would have taken a different shape. He might have avoided the quarrel on the road if he had not been so proud or hot-tempered; and he might have refused to marry a woman old enough if he had not been blinded by the pride of his intelligence in solving the riddle of the Sphinx. But, then, the prophecies of the oracle would have been fulfilled in some other way, because nothing could have been prevented their fulfillment. Pride has little to do with Oedipus's killing his father and marrying his mother.

If Oedipus had not relentlessly pursued his investigations, he might have been spared the shock of discovery. Something in him drives him forward on the road to discovery. After Tiresias has first refused to tell him anything and then uttered some frightening prophecies. Oedipus is discouraged by Jocasta to continue his investigations. But he pays no heed to her philosophy of living at random. She makes another effort to stop his investigations when she has herself realized the truth, but again she failed. The Theban shepherd too tries, but in vain. It is this insistence on the truth that leads to the discovery in which lies the tragedy. We may interrupt this insistence on the truth as a form of pride, the pride of intellect, or the pride of knowing everything. The link of cause and effect is unmistakable between Oedipus's pride of intellect and Oedipus's discovery for his sins. But there is no strong link between his pride and the actual committing of his sins because the sins would have been committed in any case, if the oracle was to be

fulfilled. The oracle did say that Oedipus would be guilty of those crimes but no oracle said that Oedipus must discover the truth.

Oedipus is thus an **authentic tragic hero** in the Aristotelian sense because his tragedy is as much due to his own initiatives in discovering the truth as to external circumstances. To the modern mind, a high social position is not necessary for the tragic hero nor do they recognize the validity of oracles too.

In Oedipus we see the **helplessness of man in the face of the circumstances and his essential greatness**. The manner in which Oedipus blinds himself after realizing his guilt and in which he endures his punishment raise him high in our esteem. The spirit of Oedipus remains unconquered even in his defeat and that is the essential fact about a tragic hero.

Oedipus Rex: Catharsis

According to Aristotle tragedy should arouse the feeling of pity and terror – pity for the hero’s tragic fate and terror at the sight of the dreadful suffering befalling particularly the hero. By arousing pity and terror, a tragedy aims at the catharsis of these and similar other emotions and cures these feelings which always exist in our hearts. A tragedy, hence, affords emotional relief and the spectators rise at its end with a feeling of pleasure. This, according to Aristotle, is the aesthetic function of tragedy. Through catharsis the emotions are reduced to a healthy and balanced proportion. Besides pity and fear an audience also experiences contempt, hatred, delight, indignation, and admiration. Still, these emotions are less important or less intense. Pity and fear are the dominant emotions and they are intensely produced.

Tragedy, by means of pity, fear and other emotions also provides exercise and nourishment for the emotional side of human nature. It also satisfies our love of beauty and of truth, of truth to life and truth about life. Experience, and more experience, is a natural human craving. Tragedy leads to an enrichment of our experience of human life. It may teach us to live more wisely and widen the boundaries of our experience of life. Tragedy shows the eternal contradiction between human weakness and human courage, human stupidity and human greatness, human frailty and human strength. Tragedy gives us pleasure by exhibiting human endurance and perseverance in the face of calamities and disasters.

Pity and fear are the dominating feelings produced by the play **“Oedipus Rex”**. Apart from catharsis of these feelings, the play deepens our experience of human life and enhances our understanding of human nature and human psychology. The prologue produces in us pity and fear, pity for the suffering population of Thebes and fear of future misfortunes which might befall the people. The Priest, describing the state of affairs, refers to a tide of death from which there is no escape, death in the fields and pastures, in the wombs of women, death caused by the plague which grips the city. Oedipus gives expression to his feeling of sympathy, telling the Priest that his heart is burdened by the suffering of all the people. The entry-song of the Chorus following the prologue heightens the feelings of pity and fear. The Chorus says:

“With fear my heart is riven, fear of what shall be told. Fear is upon us.”

Oedipus' proclamation of his resolve to track down the murderer of Laius brings some relief to us. But the curse, which Oedipus utters upon the unknown criminal and upon those who may be sheltering him, also terrifies us by its fierceness. The scene in which Oedipus clashes with Tiresias contributes to the feelings of pity and terror, the prophecy of Tiresias is frightening because it relates to Oedipus. Tiresias speaks to Oedipus in alarming tones, describing him in a veiled manner as **"husband of the woman who bore him, father-killer and father-supplanter"** and accusing him openly of being a murderer.

In the scene with Creon, the feeling of terror is much less, arising mainly from Oedipus' sentence of death against the innocent Creon which is soon withdrawn. The tension reappears with Oedipus' suspicion on hearing from Jocasta that Laius was killed where three roads met. Oedipus' account of his arrival at Thebes arouses the feeling of terror by its reference to the prophecy which he received from the oracle, but both terror and pity subside when Jocasta tries to assure Oedipus that prophecies deserve no attention. The song of the Chorus harshly rebuking the proud tyrant revives some of the terror in our minds, but it again subsides at the arrival of the Corinthian after hearing whom Jocasta mocks at the oracles. The drama now continues at a rather low key till first Jocasta and then Oedipus find themselves confronted with the true facts of the situations. With the discovery of true facts, both the feelings of pity and fear reach their climax, with Oedipus lamenting his sinful acts of killing his father and marrying his mother.

But the feelings of pity and fear do not end here. The song of the Chorus immediately following the discovery arouses our deepest sympathy at Oedipus' sad fate. The Chorus extends the scope of its observations to include all mankind:

"All the generations of mortal man add up to nothing."

Then comes the messenger from the palace and he gives a terrible account of the manner in which Jocasta hanged herself and Oedipus blinded himself. The messenger concluded his account with the remark that the royal household is today overwhelmed by **"calamity, death, ruin, tears and shame"**. The conversation of the Chorus with Oedipus who is not blind is also extremely moving. Oedipus speaks of his physical and mental agony and the Chorus tries to console him. Oedipus describes himself as:

"...... shedder of father's blood, husband of mother, Godless and child of shame, begetter of brother-sons".

The feeling of deep grief by Oedipus is experienced by the audience with an equal intensity. The scene of Oedipus' meeting with his daughters is also very touching. His daughters, laments Oedipus, will have to wander homeless and husbandless. He appeals to Creon in moving words to look after them.

The feeling of pity and fear has been continuously experienced from the very opening scene of the play. Other feelings aroused in our hearts were irritation with Oedipus at his ill-treatment of Tiresias, anger against Tiresias for his obstinacy and insolence, admiration for Creon for his moderation and loyalty, liking for Jocasta for her devotion to Oedipus, admiration for Oedipus for his relentless pursuits of truth and so on. But the feelings of relief, delight and pleasure have also been aroused in us. These feelings are

the result partly of the felicity of the language employed and the music of poetry, but mainly the result of the spectacle of human greatness which we have witnessed side by side with the spectacle of human misery. The sins of Oedipus were committed unknowingly; in fact Oedipus did his utmost to avert the disaster. Oedipus is, therefore, essentially an innocent man, despite his sin of pride and tyranny. Jocasta too is innocent, in spite of her sin of scepticism. There is no villainy to be condemned in the play. The essential goodness of Oedipus, Jocasta and Creon is highly pleasing to us. But even more pleasing though at the same time saddening is the spectacle of human endurance seen in Jocasta and Oedipus inflicting upon themselves a punishment that is awful and terrible. In the closing scene, the blind Oedipus rises truly to heroic heights, displaying an indomitable spirit. Blind and helpless though he now is, and extremely ashamed of his parricide and incestuous experience as he is, he yet shows an invulnerable mind and it is this which has a sustaining, cheering, uplifting and exhilarating effect upon us.

Jocasta's fate underlines that of Oedipus. So does the great song of the Chorus on the laws which are "enthroned above". The song and in particular the denunciation of the tyrant are relevant to Oedipus and Jocasta. The song begins with a prayer for purity and reverence, clearly an answer to Oedipus' and Jocasta's doubts about the oracles. It ends with an even more emphatic expression of fear of what will happen if the truth of the divine oracles is denied. Between the first and the last stanzas the Chorus describes the man who is born of hybris, such hybris as is displayed by the King and the Queen. The description follows to a large extent the conventional picture of the tyrant, mentioning his pride, greed and irreverence. Not every feature fits the character of Oedipus, nor should we expect that. The Chorus fears that he who behaves with presumption, pride and self-confidence will turn tyrannical and impious, and they foresee that Zeus, the true King of the world will punish the sins of the mortal King. If he does not do so, all religion will become meaningless, and all will be lost.

Oedipus Rex: Tragic Irony

Tragic irony was used initially in **ancient Greek tragedy** and later almost in **all tragedies**. Irony consists essentially in the **contrast of the two aspects of the same remark or situation**. A remark made by a character in a play may have one meaning for him and another meaning for other character and the audience or one meaning for the speaker and the other characters and another meaning for the audience. Similarly, a situation may have a **double significance** in the sense that a disaster may be foreseen by the audience while the characters may be ignorant of it. **Irony heightens the tragic effect.** Sophocles has used irony with striking effect in his plays.

"Oedipus Rex" is replete with tragic irony and is found in most of the **speeches and situations**. There are many occasions on which the audience is aware of the facts while the speaker is ignorant of those facts and some other characters, on the other hand, present a contrast which lends an increased emphasis to a tragic fact or to the ultimate tragic outcome. The proclamation of Oedipus that he will make a determined effort to trace the murderer of Laius and the curse that Oedipus utters upon the killer and upon those sheltering the criminal, possess a tragic irony in view of the audience's knowledge that Oedipus himself will ultimately prove to be Laius' murderer. Oedipus proclaims that no house in Thebes is to provide shelter to the guilty man and that the gods will curse those who disobey his command. Thus, without knowing the real meaning of his words,

Oedipus announces the sentences of banishment against the murderer and heightens the tragic effect of the discovery which comes towards the end of the play. Oedipus does not know that he himself is to become the victim of the punishment which he is proclaiming but the audience knows it. In this contrast between Oedipus' ignorance and our knowledge of the true fact lies the tragic irony.

The **scene between Oedipus and Tiresias** is fraught with tragic irony throughout. Tiresias is the prophet who knows everything while Oedipus does not know himself as such. Tiresias would not like to disclose the secret but Oedipus quickly loses his temper thus provoking the prophet to say what he never wanted to say. Tiresias tells Oedipus that he himself is the guilty man he is seeking and that he is living in a sinful union with the one he loves. The impact of these words is totally lost upon Oedipus. The charges of Tiresias enrage him and he insults the prophet by calling him a sightless sot showing his own inner blindness. An irony lies in the fact that Tiresias, physically blind, knows the truth while Oedipus, having normal eyesight, is totally blind to that truth. There is irony also in the contrast between what Oedipus truly is and what he thinks himself to be. To Tiresias he boasts of his intelligence citing his past victory over the Sphinx. The terrible predictions that Tiresias makes regarding the fate in store for Oedipus also possess irony in the sense that, while we know their tragic imports, Oedipus treats them as the ravings of a madman. These predictions become more awful when we realize that they will prove to be true and valid. Tiresias warns Oedipus that the killer of Laius will ultimately find himself blind, an exile, a beggar, a brother and a father at a same time to the children he loves, a son and a husband to the woman who bore him, a father-killer and father-supplenter. Even the Chorus, ignorant of the facts, refuses to believe what Tiresias has said about Oedipus. Thus both Oedipus and the Chorus are unaware of the truth while Tiresias and the audience is fully aware of it.

Tragic irony is also found in the **scene with Creon**. Creon begs Oedipus not to think him a traitor and not to pass the sentence of death or exile against him. But Oedipus blinded by his authority and his anger shows himself relentless. This situation is ironical of the final scene where the roles are reversed. There Oedipus begs Creon to look after his daughters, and entreats him to pass the order of banishment against him. Creon, being a moderate man, does not show himself unrelenting in that scene. The pathos of the final scene is intensified.

Then there is the **scene with Jocasta**. Oedipus and Jocasta are ignorant of the true facts. The audience, aware of the facts, experiences a deep sorrow at the fate which is going to overtake these characters. Jocasta is sceptical of oracles. She thinks no man possesses the secret of divination and as a proof she tells what she and her husband did to the child, who, according to the oracle, was to kill his father. There is palpable irony in Jocasta's unbelief in oracles and her citing as proof the very case which is to prove the truth of one oracle received by her and the late Laius. This irony deepens Jocasta's tragedy.

There is **irony also in the account of his life which Oedipus gives to Jocasta**. Oedipus thinks himself to be the son of Polybus and Merope: he fled from Corinth after the oracle had told him of the crimes he would commit: he has all along been under the impression that he has avoided committing the crimes foretold by the oracles. But all the time Oedipus has been unknowingly performing certain actions leading to the fulfillment of those very prophecies which he had been striving to belie, just as King Laius had

earlier taken desperate but futile measures to prevent the fulfillment of the prophecy which has been communicated to him by the oracle.

When the Corinthian messenger brings the news of Polybus' death, Jocasta gets another chance to **mock at the oracles** without realizing that her mockery will turn against herself.

"Where are you now, divine prognostication?"

Jocasta tells Oedipus that this news proves the hollowness of oracles because Polybus whom Oedipus believed to be his father has died a natural death. There is irony also in the simple remark of the messenger that Jocasta is the **"true consort"** of a man like Oedipus. Neither the messenger nor Jocasta knows the awful meaning of these words. Jocasta makes an exultant speech on the desirability of living at random and on mother marrying as merely a figment of the imagination. Jocasta makes this speech only a few moments before the truth dawns upon her. The Corinthian, who wanted to free Oedipus of his fear of marrying his mother, ends by revealing, unknowingly, the fact that Jocasta's husband, Oedipus, is really her son, although this revelation is at this stage confined to Jocasta. The tragic irony of this situation and in what is said by the Corinthian and Jocasta in this scene is evident.

The **song of the Chorus**, after Jocasta has left in a fit of grief and sorrow, is full of tragic irony. The Chorus thereby pays a tribute to what it thinks to be the divine parentage of Oedipus. There is a big contrast between this supposition of the Chorus and the actual reality. The arrival of the Theban shepherd is the point at which the climax of the tragedy is reached.

After the discovery there is hardly any room for tragic irony. The concluding part consists of a long account of the self-murder and the self-blinding, a dialogue between Oedipus and the Chorus, and a scene between Oedipus and Creon including the brief lament by Oedipus on the wretched condition of his daughters. The concluding portion of the play is deeply moving and poignant, but contains little or no tragic irony.

Oedipus Rex bristles with tragic irony. It opposes Oedipus against those who know i.e. Tiresias. Where characters themselves are not omniscient, the audience is. The audience knows the gist of the story and can be surprised only in the means by which the necessary ends are achieved. They know that Oedipus is, in all sincerity, telling a falsehood when he says:

"I shall speak, as a stranger to the whole question and stranger to the action."

The falsehood is, however, qualified in the term stranger: the stranger who met and killed King Laius, who met and married Queen Jocasta, the stranger who was no true stranger at all. At the outset, he says:

"For I know well that all of you are sick, but though you are sick, there's none of you who is so sick as I."

Here he is, indeed, speaking the truth, but more truth, than he knows, because he is using sickness only in a symbolic sense while actually it is true of him in a literal tense.

In addition to this irony of detail, there is a larger irony in the **inversion of the whole action.** The homeless wanderer by delivering the city of Thebes from the sphinx and marrying Jocasta became a King in fact, but this revelation turned him once more into a homeless wanderer, who had once gone bright eyed with his strong traveller's staff, now uses the staff to feel the way before him.

The **reversed pattern** is seen again in the fact that the cruel oracles have their darkest moment just before they come clear. Jocasta's words mocking the prophecy of the gods are echoed and amplified in Oedipus' typical tyrant-speech of unbelief. The role of the helpers is another example. Sophocles provides at least one helper, or rescuer, for every act. The appeal in the prologue is to Oedipus, himself a rescuer in the past. Oedipus appeals to Creon who comes from and represents Apollo and Delphi. It is as a rescuer that Tiresias is called. Jocasta intervenes to help. So does the Corinthian messenger, and the last helper, the Theban shepherd, is the true and original rescuer. Those who do not know the reality are eager to help; those who know are reluctant. But all helper alike push Oedipus over the edge into disaster.

Oedipus Rex: Character is Destiny

"Oedipus Rex" is a **tragedy of fate**. The **crucial events** in the play have been **pre-determined by fate or the gods**. Man seems **helpless** facing the circumstances which mould his destiny. King Laius was told that his own son by Jocasta would kill him. Laius did **everything possible** to prevent such a disaster. Once Jocasta gave birth to a son, Laius had him chained and handed him over to a trustworthy servant with strict orders that the child be exposed on. Mt. Cithaeron and allowed to perish. But the servant, out of compassion, handed over the child to a Corinthian shepherd who passed him on to the Corinthian King. The child grew up as the son of the King and Queen of Corinth and later killed his true father, Laius, in complete ignorance. Apollo's **oracle was fulfilled** even though Laius and Jocasta took the extreme step to escape the fate foretold by the oracle.

Oedipus had also to **submit to the destiny** which Apollo's oracle pronounced for him. He learnt from the oracle that he would kill his own father and marry his own mother. He, too, tried his utmost to avert a terrible fate and fled from Corinth. His wanderings took him to Thebes, where people were facing a great misfortune. King Laius had been killed and the city was in the grip of the Sphinx, who was causing a lot of destruction because nobody was able to solve her riddle. Oedipus solved the riddle and put an end to the monster. Oedipus was joyfully received by Theban people as their King and was given Laius's widow as his wife. Thus, in complete ignorance of the identity of his parents, he killed his father and married his mother. He performed these disastrous acts not only unknowingly, but as a result of his efforts to escape the cruel fate which the oracle at had communicated to him.

It is evident that the occurrences which bring about the tragedy in the life of Laius, Oedipus, and Jocasta are the work of that **mysterious supernatural power** called **fate or destiny or be given the name of Apollo**. This supernatural power had **pre-determined certain tragic events** and even informed the human beings in advance. These human beings take whatever measures, to avert those events; and yet things turn

out exactly as they had been foretold by the oracles. Oedipus has done nothing at all to deserve the fate which overtakes him. Nor do Laius and Jocasta deserve the fate they meet,

According to Aristotle the tragic hero is a **prosperous man** who falls into misfortune due to some serious **defect or hamartia**. No doubt that Oedipus is an **able ruler**, **a father** of his people, a great **administrator** and an **outstanding intellect**. His chief care is not for himself but for the people of the State. The people look upon him as their **savior and worshipped him**. He is also a **religious man** in the orthodox sense. That such a man should meet the sad fate is unbearably painful to us.

Oedipus is not, however, **a perfect man or a perfect King**. He does suffer from a **hamartia** or a defect of character. He is **hot-tempered**, **rash**, **hasty** in judgments, **easily provoked** and somewhat **arbitrary**. Though in the beginning his attitude towards Tiresias is one of reverence, he quickly **loses his temper** and speaks to the prophet in an **insulting manner** accusing both him and Creon of treason and showing a **blind suspicion** towards friends. His **position and authority** seem to be leading him to become a **tyrant**. Creon has to remind him that the city does not belong to him alone. Even when blinded he draws the reproach:

"Do not crave to be master in everything always."

All this shows that Oedipus is not a man of a **flawless character**, not completely **free from faults**, not an **embodiment of all the virtues**. His **pride** in his own **wisdom** is one of his **glaring faults**. His success in solving the riddle of the Sphinx further developed his inherent feeling of pride. There is in him a **failure of piety** even. Under the influence of Jocasta, he grows **sceptical of the oracles**. Thus there is in him a **lack of true wisdom** which took him on the verge of becoming an impious tyrant.

If Oedipus had **not been hot-tempered**, he might **not have got entangled in a fight** on the road and might have not been guilty of **murdering his father**. Similarly, if he had been a little **more cautious**, he might have hesitated to **marry a woman old enough to be his mother**. After all there was **no compulsion** either in the fight or in his marriage. Both his acts may thus be **attributed to his own defects** of character. All at once it has to be accepted that the **decree of the oracles were inescapable**. Even if Oedipus had taken the **precautions**, the prophecy was to be fulfilled. The oracle's prediction was **unconditional**; it did not say that if Oedipus did such and such a thing he would kill his father and marry his mother. The oracle simply said that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother. What the oracle said, was bound to happen.

If Oedipus is the **innocent victim** of inescapable doom, he would be a **mere puppet** and the play becomes a **tragedy of destiny** which denies **human freedom**. Sophocles does not want to regard Oedipus as a puppet; there is reason to believe that Oedipus has been portrayed largely as a free agent. The attendant in the play insistently describes Oedipus' **self-blinding as voluntary** and distinguishes it from his **involuntary murder** of his father and **marriage** with his mother. Oedipus' actions were **fate-bound**, but everything that he does, he does as a free agent – his **condemnation** of Tiresias and Creon, his **conversation** with Jocasta to reveal the facts, his **pursuing his investigation** despite the efforts of Jocasta and the Theban shepherd to stop him, and so on. Oedipus, **freely choosing a series of actions**, led to

his own ruin. Oedipus could have left the **plague** to take its course but his **pity over the sufferings** of his people forced him to consult the oracle. He could have left the **murder of Laius uninvestigated**, but his **love of justice** obliged him to inquire. He need not have **forced the truth** from the reluctant Theban shepherd but he could not **rest content with a lie**. Tiresias, Jocasta, the Theban shepherd each tried to stop Oedipus, but he was **determined to solve the problem of his own parentage**. The direct cause of his ruin is not fate; no oracle said that he must discover the truth. The cause of his ruin lies in his own **weakness**. His own **strength and courage**, his **loyalty to Thebes** and his **love of truth** causes his ruin. All this shows him a free agent.

In spite of the facts that Oedipus is a **free agent** in most of his actions, still the most tragic events of his life – his murder of his father and his marriage with his mother – had **inevitably to happen**. Here the **responsibility of fate cannot be denied**. The real tragedy lies in the discovery of truth, which is due to his own traits. If he had not **discovered the truth**, he would have continued to live in a **state of blissful ignorance** and there would have been **no tragedy and no suffering**. But the **parricide** and the **incest** were **pre-ordained** and for these fate is responsible.

Oedipus Rex: Role of Chorus

Greek tragedy is said to develop itself from the group of dancers and singers who used to partake in the worship of various gods. According to Aristotle the Chorus should be like one of the characters. Gradually the role of the Chorus became less and less important in classical tragedy, until in Roman tragedy the speeches of the Chorus were supposed to be made in between the acts.

Chorus discharges some broad functions in all classical tragedies. The structure of a Greek tragedy is determined by the Chorus. After the prologue, it is with the entry of the Chorus that a Greek tragedy begins. Various episodes are also marked off by choric odes. The conclusion of a Greek tragedy occurs with the exode or the exit song of the Chorus. It is the function of the Chorus to **comment on actions and events**. It also sometimes questions the characters. Its standard role is that of **the moderator**. At times it **represents the view-point of the common spectator** and in some cases it **represents the view-point of the dramatist** himself.

The functions of the Chorus are very well performed in Oedipus Rex. In the very first ode the **Chorus depicts the horror of the plague and expresses an apprehension about the message from the oracle of Delphi.** Other odes comment on the action that has taken place after the last ode and build an atmosphere appropriate to that stage of the play. It plays the role of a peace-maker between the king and Creon and succeeds in getting the king’s pardon for the latter. After the exit of Tiresias it comments on the terrible predictions which Tiresias has made but shows determination to support the king. Its most significant response is when Oedipus and Jocasta have expressed irreverent thoughts against the oracles. At many other times also they reflect the dominant mood and help to deepen it. When Oedipus imagines that he is the son of the goodness of luck, the Chorus, immediately sing that their master, Oedipus, might be the son of Apollo.

In the fifth or last choric ode in Oedipus Rex, the **Chorus reflects the dejection of Oedipus** and says that all the generations of moral man add up to nothing. This ode must not be regarded as reflecting the final mood and impression of the play, for the impression is as much of the greatness of the human spirit as of the insignificance of man and the transitoriness of his happiness. This ode must, therefore, be looked upon only as reflecting a final judgment of it. Oedipus remains forceful even in his downfall; in a sense he is still heroic.

The Chorus **takes part in the dialogues** also. When Oedipus consults them about ending the plague in the city, they express disappointment that the oracle had not guided them about the identity of Laius' murderer. They also tell him what they know about the murder of their previous king and its circumstances. When Creon, learning that the king has accused him of treason, comes on the stage he talks to the Chorus, who tell him that the king's accusation was probably made in the heat of anger. Creon asked if the king looked absolutely serious while making the charge and they rightly say that it is not for them to look into the eyes of his master when he speaks. When Oedipus has almost passed a sentence upon Creon, Jocasta arrives on the scene and first talks to the Chorus. They request her to settle the difference between the two men. They are worried when they see Jocasta going into the palace in a very dejected mood, and they give expression to their apprehension. Oedipus asks them about the shepherd who gave the infant to the Corinthian, they answer that his queen would be able to answer the question better. They sympathize with Oedipus when they see him after he has blinded himself. It is clear, thus, that the Chorus never takes a direct hand in the action. It does not consist only of spectators but influences the action in various subtle ways.

The contribution of the Chorus in Oedipus Rex is considerable. They link the play with common humanity. In some sense they are often in the position of the **ideal spectator**. They fill in the gaps in the action when no other character is there on the stage. They **add to it the element of melody** which must have been one of the attractions of Greek tragedy. They provide an appropriate shift between the titanic, heroic figure of Oedipus and the mass of common humanity represented by the two shepherds in Oedipus Res. The tragedy of Oedipus and its relevance to common life is very well stressed by the Chorus in its exit ode or exode.

Oedipus Rex : Fate

In the Greek tragedy Oedipus the King written by Sophocles, the antagonist is fate. The theme of fate is deeply intertwined in the plot. In this play, all meet their fate despite attempting to escape it. Two characters bring about a fate worse than their original fate as punishment for trying to cheat fate.

The first instance-involving fate occurs when Oedipus sends Creon, Jocasta's brother, to the temple of Apollo, the god of prophecy and healing, to find the fate of Thebes and how to rid Thebes of the plague the people are suffering from. Oedipus says,

I acted at once. I sent Creon,
My wife's own brother, to Delphi—
Apollo the Prophet's oracle7—to learn
What I might do or say to save our city. (Sophocles, 81-84)

It is important to note that Apollo made the prophecy to King Laius, Jocasta's former husband, and Jocasta, Oedipus's wife, that they would bear a son who would kill King Laius, and Apollo made the prophecy to Oedipus that he would kill his biological father and sleep with his biological mother.

Fate is next brought into the play when Creon is sent in search of the blind prophet of Apollo, Tiresias. Against his will, Tiresias reveals Oedipus' fate. Oedipus is so anxious to find the murderer of King Laius that he will not give up until the murderer is found. Oedipus relentlessly pursues the truth, unwilling to give up until the truth is found.

After Oedipus repeatedly provokes Tiresias, he reveals what Oedipus is and who Oedipus really is. Tiresias says to Oedipus,

You cannot imagine…I tell you,
you and your loved ones live together in infamy,
you cannot see how far you've gone in guilt. (Sophocles, 417-419)

Tiresias is alluding to the fact that Oedipus unknowingly is married to his mother and has produced offspring through her. Oedipus is too blind to comprehend what Tiresias is saying. Tiresias goes on to say, "I pity you, flinging at me the very insults / each man here will fling at you so soon" (Sophocles, 423-424). Tiresias is warning Oedipus that everything he thinks he has is not really his. People will turn against Oedipus and he will lose everything. Oedipus blasphemes against the gods when he tells Tiresias that he does not have the gift of prophecy. This is blasphemy because Tiresias is the messenger between gods and humans, and when Oedipus calls him a liar he is denying the words of the gods.

Upon further provocations, Tiresias tells Oedipus that Oedipus does not know where he is living or who his parents are. Tiresias insinuates that Oedipus is both father and sibling to his children when he says, "And a crowd of other horrors you'd never dream / will level you with yourself and all your children" (Sophocles, lines 485-486). Next Tiresias predicts, "This day will bring your birth and your destruction" (Sophocles, 499).

In his final speech towards Oedipus, Tiresias tells Oedipus that he is the murderer. Tiresias further tells Oedipus that though he is a stranger to Thebes, he will soon discover that he is a native Theban. Oedipus will also discover that he is both father and brother to his children, and both son and husband to his wife. Tiresias aptly foretells that Oedipus will lose everything; that Oedipus will be blind and exiled (Sophocles, 510-525).

After first arguing with Tiresias and then Creon, Oedipus talks to Jocasta, bringing about our third example of fate as an antagonist. Upon learning what the argument was about Jocasta relays that an oracle had come to King Laius and told him that he would "die a victim at the hands of his own son" (Sophocles, 786-787). The king had pierced the infant's ankles and sent him to die, and besides King Laius was killed by highwayman. Jocasta argues that Oedipus should not fear prophecy because of the following,**Apollo brought neither thing to pass. My baby,**

no more murdered his father than Laius suffered,
his wildest fear—death at his own son's hands.
That's how the seers and all their revelations. (Sophocles, 794-797)

Jocasta should have known that she could not outwit the gods, or fate. Fate next comes into play when Oedipus, who has begun to think he is King Laius' killer, recounts the dinner where the drunken man accused Oedipus of being a bastard. Oedipus goes to the oracle at Delphi to find his destiny. The oracle tells Oedipus as follows:

You are fated to couple with your mother, you will bring,
A breed of children into the light no man can bear to see—
You will kill your father, the one who gave your life!. (Sophocles, 873-875)

After hearing the oracle's prediction, Oedipus flees Corinth to protect Merope and Polybus and to escape his destiny, which gives us our fifth instance of fate.

The change in the curse was brought about by Jocasta, who feared the oracle's prophecy. Jocasta sent the infant, Oedipus, to his death. In doing this Jocasta was attempting to cheat fate. Jocasta thought that if she killed the baby, she could change her husband's destiny. The added prophecy that Oedipus would lie with his mother and produce cursed offspring is a result of Jocasta's attempt to cheat fate. Oedipus is really an innocent victim of fate.

Again fate is seen when the messenger brings news that Polybus has died a natural death. Both Oedipus and Jocasta rejoice briefly in this news for it further proves that oracles are wrong Yet, Oedipus still has fear of prophecy for he will not return to Corinth as long as Merope is alive, for fear that he will lay with her. The messenger tells Oedipus that Merope is not Oedipus' true mother, as he himself gave Oedipus to her and to Pelops as a gift (Sophocles, 1113-1119). It is a strange twist of fate this messenger both took Oedipus to Corinth, but also is one of the final puzzle pieces in Oedipus' true identity.

When the shepherd arrives on the scene he is forced by Oedipus to verify that Oedipus is the child of Jocasta and King Laius. Oedipus' is now forced to realize that he has not escaped his fate. The entire prophecy has been fulfilled. After finding Jocasta's body, "And there we saw the woman hanging by the neck" (Sophocles, 1396), Oedipus does the following:

He rips off her brooches, the long gold pins
holding her ropes—and lifting them high,
looking straight up into the points,
he digs them down the sockets of his eyes, crying. (Sophocles, 1403-1406)

In the end of the play Oedipus is blind, ruined, and exiled just as Tiresias foretold when he said,

You are the scourge of your own flesh and blood,
And the double lash of your mother and your father's curse
Will whip you from this land one day, their football
Treading you down in terror, darkness shrouding
Your eyes that now can see the light. (Sophocles, 474-479)

Fate came out victorious in the end. In the Greek vision Fate cannot be altered or cheated. Even the gods cannot change Fate. Instead of claiming one victim, many were

ruined. If Jocasta had not tried to cheat fate, perhaps King Laius would be the only death. Instead King Laius and Jocasta are both dead, Oedipus is ruined and his children are cursed by this incestuous pollution. Fate is a force not to be reckoned with.

Considering all the facts ,we can say that Oedipus is neither a free agent nor a mere victim of fate. The major events of his life are determined by fate, but his own acts such as fleeing from Corinth, killing an old man, marrying an aged woman, without knowing his whole identity, showing over-confidence and milking the shepherd for information all have contributed in precipitating the disaster.

Oedipus Rex : Plot Construction

Plot is the "first principle," the most important feature of tragedy. Aristotle defines plot as "the arrangement of the incidents". According to him ;"The plot must be "a single whole," with a beginning, middle, and end. It must be "complete," having "unity of action."

By this Aristotle means that the plot must be structurally self-contained, with the incidents bound together by internal necessity, each action leading inevitably to the next without any intervention.

"The worst kinds of plots are "'episodic,' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence" The plot must be "of a certain magnitude," both quantitatively (length, complexity) and qualitatively ("seriousness" and universal significance). It should not be too brief; it may be either simple or complex, although complex is better. Simple plots have only a "change of fortune". Complex plots have both "reversal of intention" and "recognition "connected with the catastrophe (disaster)."

Oedipus Rex is the finest example from plot construction point of view and it has been envied by many of the writers. According to Aristotle, the plot of Oedipus Rex satisfies all the requirement of a good plot in a very nice way and he, in his book "the poetic", presents Oedipus Rex as a model tragedy from all dramatic convictions' point of view. When we analyse critically Oedipus Rex from plot construction point of view we can say that the first thing which strikes us is its unusual plot.

Oedipus Rex has an extremely unusual plot. It is the story of a King who is brought down by the unforeseen consequences of his own oath. From beginning to end it is concerned with the investigation of some past events. The play unites two parallel problems. One is the detection of murderer of Laius and the second is the identity of Oedipus himself. The two problems are one in a way and solving of either of them is like solving the both.

The general pattern of the story is that of finding of a lost one. The theme can be applied at several levels. We can say that Oedipus finds his parents or Thebes and Corinth discover their lost prince. This is very old theme. The foundling story has certain set features. For example, the child is generally believed to be dead, though it often escapes miraculously or by some kind human beings. The child grows up in the house-hold of a poor man but at the appropriated time, his identity is discovered by some physical signs or tokens. The Oedipus story is an exception in the sense that here the prince is brought up still as a prince, though in the family of another king. The token are not used by

Sophocles towards the solution – he has another use for them, but they are there in the form of pins stuck through the baby's ankles. Often this theme is used in many comical stories but Oedipus is a true tragedy.

Unity of Action: - Each of the incidents in this play is part of a tightly constructed cause-and-effect chain. The plague in Thebes prompts Oedipus to send Creon to consult the oracle of Delphi; the oracle's reply that the murderer of Laius must be banished from Thebes prompts Oedipus pronounce a solemn curse on the murderer and to send for Tiresias. Tiresias states that Oedipus is the murderer, but since the king knows himself to be innocent (or thinks he knows), he accuses Creon of plotting with Tiresias against him. The quarrel of Oedipus and Creon brings Jocasta from the house; seeking to calm down her husband and prove that oracles cannot be trusted, she tells again of how Laius died. When she mentions that he was killed "at a place where three roads meet," Oedipus suddenly begins to suspect that he may indeed have killed the king without knowing who he was. To settle the matter, they send for the Herdsman who is the only survivor of that attack. Meanwhile a messenger arrives from Corinth to inform Oedipus that his supposed father, King Polybus of Corinth, has died. Oedipus rejoices that he did not kill his father as the oracle had prophesied but is still worried that he may marry his mother, the Messenger, seeking to relieve him of this fear, innocently tells him that Polybus and Merope were not his real parents.

The arrival of the Messenger is the only action in the play that is not directly caused by a previous action. However, this is a perfect example of Aristotle's contention that if coincidences cannot be avoided, they should have "an air of design," for this messenger seems brought by fate, since he is the missing link in Oedipus' story, the very man who received Oedipus as a baby from the Herdsman. Thus, when the Herdsman arrives and they tell their respective stories, the whole truth emerges. This is the climax, or turning point, of the plot—the truth about Oedipus leads directly to the suicide of Jocasta and Oedipus' self-blinding and request to be exiled. The departure of Oedipus from Thebes will lift the plague, thus resolving the problem that started off the chain of events and concluding the plot.

This plot is also a perfect example of the exclusion of the irrational and the skillful handling of traditional elements of the myth on which the play is based. Sophocles does not dramatize any of the admittedly irrational parts of the myth (e.g., why did Laius and Jocasta not kill the baby outright? If Oedipus was afraid of marrying his mother, why did he marry a woman old enough to be his mother? etc). Instead, in a brilliant move, he constructs the play as an investigation of the past. The tremendous sense of inevitability and fate in this play stems from the fact that all the irrational things have already been done; they are unalterable. Once Oedipus begins to investigate the murder of Laius, the whole truth about the past is bound to emerge; as he himself says,

"O, O, O, they will all come,
All come out clearly!"

Complex Plot: The peripeteia of the play is the Messenger's reversal of intention; in seeking to help Oedipus by telling him that Polybus and Merope were not his real parents, he instead creates the opposite effect, providing the crucial piece of information that will reveal that Oedipus has indeed killed his father and married his mother. As Aristotle recommends, this is directly connected to the anagnorisis, for the Messenger and Herdsman piece together the whole story of Oedipus, enabling him to "recognize" his true identity, to gain the essential knowledge he has lacked. The peripeteia and anagnorisis directly cause Oedipus' catastrophe, or change of fortune from good to bad, and lead to the emotional "scenes of suffering" with Creon and his children. In a sense, each of Oedipus' actions can be considered a reversal of intention, and each gives him a little more knowledge of the dreadful truth that will lead to his downfall.

Role of the Hamartia: The play offers a perfect illustration of the nature of the hamartia as "mistake" or error rather than flaw. Oedipus directly causes his own downfall not because he is evil, or proud, or weak, but simply because he does not know who he is. If he really wanted to avoid the oracle, leaving Corinth was a mistake, killing an unknown older aristocrat was a mistake, and marrying an older queen was a mistake. Seeking to uncover the past, cursing the murderer of Laius, sending for the Herdsman—each of the actions that he pursued so vigorously and for such good reasons led to his doom. Oedipus is not morally guilty, but he is radically ignorant, and Sophocles does not present him as a unique case but rather as a paradigm of the human condition, as "a man like ourselves." In the words of the Chorus:

What man, what man on earth wins more of happiness than a seeming and after that turning away?

Oedipus, you are my pattern of this,
Oedipus, you and your fate! (stasimon 5)

Oedipus Rex : Relationship b/w man and the gods

Crucial Events Pre-determined:- Oedipus Rex is, to a large extent, a tragedy of fate. The crucial events in the play have been pre-determined by fate or the gods. Human beings seem rather helpless in the face of the circumstances which mould their destiny.

King Laius was told that his own son by Jocasta would kill him. Laius did everything possible to avoid such a disaster. As soon as Jocasta gave birth to a son, Laius had him chained and handed him over to a trustworthy servant with strict and precise instructions to the effect that the child be exposed on. Mt. Cithaeron and allowed to perish. No child could have survived under the circumstances. But the servant, out of compassion, handed over the child to a Corinthian shepherd who passed him on to the Corinthian King. The child grew up as the son of Polybus and Merope, the King and Queen of Corinth, and subsequently killed his true father, Laius. Of course, the son killed his father unknowingly and in complete ignorance of the real identity of his victim. But Apollo's oracle was fulfilled in the case of Laius even though he and his wife Jocasta took the extreme step of ordering the death of their own child, in order to escape the fate which had been foretold by the oracle.

Oedipus's Efforts to Avert His Fate Thwarted: - Oedipus, the son whom Laius had begotten, had likewise to submit to the destiny which Apollo's oracle pronounced for him. Oedipus learnt from the oracle that he would kill his own father and marry his own mother. Like his parents, Oedipus tried his utmost to avert a terrible fate. He fled from Corinth, determined never again to set eyes on his supposed father and mother as long as they lived. His wanderings took him to Thebes the people of which were facing a great misfortune. King Laius had been killed by an unknown traveller (who was none other than Oedipus himself) at a spot where three roads met; the city was in the grip of a frightful monster, the Sphinx, who was causing a lot of destruction because nobody was able to solve the riddle which she had propounded. Oedipus was able to solve the riddle and thus put an end to the monster. As a reward for the service he had rendered to the city, Oedipus was joyfully received by the people as their King and was given Laius's widow as his wife. Thus, in complete ignorance of the identity of both his parents, he killed his father and married his mother. He performed these disastrous acts not only unknowingly and unintentionally, but as a direct result of his efforts to escape the cruel fate which the oracle at Delphi had communicated to him.

Characters Not Responsible for their Fate: - It is evident, then, that the occurrences which bring about the tragedy in the life of Laius, Oedipus, and Jocasta are the work of that mysterious supernatural power which may be called fate or destiny or be given the name of Apollo. This supernatural power had pre-determined certain catastrophic events in the life of these human beings. These human beings are even informed in advance that they will become the victims of certain shocking events; these human beings take whatever measures they can think of, to avert those events; and yet things turn out exactly as they had been foretold by the oracles. How can we attribute any responsibility for the tragic happenings to characters? Oedipus, the greatest sufferer in the play, has done nothing at all to deserve the fate which overtakes him. Nor do Laius and Jocasta deserve the fate they meet.

The Goodness and Intelligence of Oedipus: - Let us, however, take a closer look at the character of Oedipus, the tragic hero of the play. Aristotle expressed the view that the tragic hero is a man, esteemed and prosperous, who falls into misfortune because of some hamartia or defect. Now, there can be no doubt at all about the essential goodness of Oedipus. He is an able ruler, a father of his people, an honest and great administrator, and an outstanding intellect. His chief care is not for himself but for the people of the State. The people look upon him as their saviour. He is adored and worshipped by them. He is also a religious man in the orthodox sense; he believes in oracles; he respects the

bonds of family; and he hates impurity. Indeed, in the prologue of the play we get the feeling that Oedipus is an ideal King. That such a man should meet the sad fate which he does meet is, indeed, unbearably painful to us.

Oedipus's Defects of Character: - Oedipus is not, however, a perfect man or even a perfect King. He does suffer from a hamartia or a defect of character which makes him liable to incur the wrath of the gods. He is hot-tempered, rash, hasty in forming judgments, easily provoked, and even somewhat arbitrary. Even though in the beginning his attitude towards Tiresias is one of reverence, he quickly loses his temper and speaks to the prophet in a highly insulting manner accusing both him and Creon of treason. His sentencing Creon to death even though subsequently he withdraws the punishment shows his rashness and arbitrariness. Indeed, in the two scenes with Tiresias and Creon, Oedipus shows a blind suspicion towards friends, an inclination to hasty inference, and a strange vindictiveness. When he meets opposition, or thinks he does, he easily loses all self-control. His position and authority seem to be leading him to become a tyrant. (That is the reason why this play is also called Oedipus Tyrannus). Creon has to remind him that the city does not belong to him alone. Even when blinded he draws the reproach; "Do not crave to be master in everything always." All this shows that Oedipus is not a man of a flawless character, not a man completely free from faults, not an embodiment of all the virtues. His pride in his own wisdom is one of his glaring faults. His success in solving the riddle of the Sphinx seems to have further developed his inherent feeling of pride. No seer or prophet found the solution: this is Oedipus's boast, pride and self-confidence that induce him to feel almost superior to the gods. There is in him a failure of piety even. Under the influence of Jocasta, he grows sceptical of the oracles. Thus there is in him a lack of true wisdom and this lack is an essential feature of the man who is on the verge of becoming an impious tyrant.

The Oracle's Predictions Inescapable: - But the question that arises is: what is the connection between these defects of character in Oedipus and the sad fate that he meets. It may be said that if he had not been hot-tempered, he might not have got entangled in a fight on the road and might thus have not been guilty of murdering his father. Similarly, if he had been a little more cautious, he might have hesitated to marry a woman old enough to be his mother. After all there was no compulsion either in the fight that he picked up during his journey or in the act of his marriage with Jocasta. Both his killing his father and his marrying his mother may thus be attributed to his own defects of character. At the same time it has to be recognised that the pronouncements of the oracles were inescapable. What was foretold by the oracle must inevitably happen. Even if Oedipus had taken the precautions above hinted at, the prophecy was to be fulfilled. The oracle's prediction was unconditional; it did not say that if Oedipus did such and such a thing he would kill his father and marry his mother. The oracle simply said that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother. What the oracle said was bound to happen.

Oedipus Not a Puppet, But a Free Agent in His Actions on the Stage: - If Oedipus is the innocent victim of a doom which he cannot avoid, he would appear to be a mere puppet. The whole play in that case becomes a tragedy of destiny which denies human freedom. But such a view would also be unsound. Sophocles does not want to regard Oedipus as a puppet; there is reason to believe that Oedipus has been portrayed largely as a free agent. Neither in Homer nor in Sophocles does divine fore-knowledge of certain events imply that all human actions are pre-determined. The attendant in the present

play emphatically describes Oedipus's self-blinding as voluntary and self-chosen and distinguishes it from his involuntary murder of his father and marriage with his mother. Some of Oedipus's actions were fate-bound, but everything that he does on the stage, from first to last, he does as a free agent—his condemnation of Tiresias and Creon, his conversation with Jocasta leading him to reveal the facts of his life to her and to his learning from her the circumstances of the death of Laius, his pursuing his investigation despite the efforts of Jocasta and the Theban shepherd to stop him, and so on. What fascinates us in this play is the spectacle of a man freely choosing, from the highest motives, a series of actions which lead to his own ruin. Oedipus could have left the plague to take its course but his pity over the sufferings of his people compelled him to consult the oracle. When Apollo's word came, he could still have left the murder of Laius un-investigated, but his piety and his love of justice compelled him to start an inquiry. He need not have forced the truth from a reluctant Theban shepherd, but he could not rest content with a lie and, therefore, wanted to prove the matter fully. Tiresias, Jocasta, the Theban shepherd, each in turn tried to stop Oedipus, but in vain; he was determined to solve the problem of his own parentage. The immediate cause of his ruin is not fate or the gods; no oracle said that he must discover the truth. Still less does the cause of his ruin lie in his own weakness. What causes his ruin is his own strength and courage, his loyalty to Thebes, and his love of truth. In all this we are to see him as a free agent. And his self-blinding and self-banishment are equally free acts of choice.

The Responsibility of fate and the Responsibility of Character: - What is our conclusion, then? In spite of the evidence to prove Oedipus a free agent in most of his actions as depicted in the play, we cannot forget that the most tragic events of his life—his murder of his father and his marriage with his mother—had inevitably to happen. Here the responsibility of fate cannot be denied. But the discovery by Oedipus of his crimes or sins is the result of the compulsions of his own nature. The real tragedy lies in this discovery, which is due to the traits of his own character. If he had not discovered the truth, he would have continued to live in a state of blissful ignorance and there would have been no tragedy—no shock, no self-blinding, and no suffering (assuming, of course, that Jocasta too did not discover the truth). But the parricide and the incest—these were pre-ordained and for these fate is responsible.

Oedipus Rex : Role of Hubris in the Play

Hubris means great and unreasonable pride. On the surface there are ample evidences that Oedipus falls because of his excessive and unreasonable pride. His pride starts when he runs from Corinth. He runs from Corinth when he is told by an oracle that he is doomed to kill his father and he marry his mother. He runs because he is proud of his intelligence and think that he can avoid his fate through intelligence Had he not been proud, he would have asked the oracle to avoid this fate. The oracles might have told him some way to avoid the immoral situation but he runs away and leaves the city trusting his intelligence.

He kills his father, though he does not know the real identity at that time, in a fit of pride. From the details of the encounter we come to know that Oedipus refused give way to the king because of his pride and when the king tried to force his will he killed him and all his company except one person who escaped.

Again when he embarks to investigate the murder of the king, he is motivated by pride. The following lines bear testimony to this statement: "then once more I must bring what is dark to light."

Each and every word spoken by Oedipus to Tiresias shows his pride. The following speech is noteworthy in this respect: when that hellcat the Sphinx was performing here, what help were you to the people? …. Your birds what good were they? Or the gods, for the matter of that? But I came by, Oedipus the simple man who knows nothing— I thought it out for myself, no birds helped me! And this the man you think you can destroy."

He thinks himself solver of riddles; therefore, he becomes crazed with zeal to unveil the murder of Liaus. It is his pride that leads him to think that Creon was hatching a conspiracy against him. This pride blinds him to all other consideration and he blames Creon in open. He also does not spare the blind soothsayer and charges him of treason against his throne and life. He does not even stop to think why the blind soothsayer would be in league with Creon.

When Oedipus hears the news of Polybos' death , he is overjoyed. The following speech of Oedipus also shows his excessive pride: " why should a man respect the Pythian heart, or give heed to the birds that jangle above his head? They prophesied that I should kill Polybos, kill my own father— he packed the oracle off with him underground. They are empty words."

All these detail may delude the readers to think that Oedipus was punished for the pride that he professes in his talents. It is true that Greeks thought any disrespect and blasphemy towards gods as great sin and believed that those who committed these sins cannot avoid sins. But things are not as simple in the case of Oedipus. We must bear in mind that the playwright wants to show something more involved than this. Therefore before we decide the cause of Oedipus' fall, we will have to keep a lot of things in mind.

We must be clear in our mind that Oedipus was doomed to kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus falls not because of his pride but because he kills his father and marries his mother. No doubt he commits both these acts without knowledge but as soon as he comes to know his crime, he blind himself. All this has nothing to do with his pride. He does not blind himself out humiliation or disgrace rather he punishes himself for not being able to see the difference. This points to the fact that the playwright wants to show that man has but little freedom to choose what he likes and he is fated to get what is written in his fate in spite of this he tries to fight all forces that annihilate his significance. At the end of the play the writer seems suggesting that man is not "like butterflies to the wanton boys to the gods" but he is responsible what happens to him.

In short we can say that Oedipus falls because he was doomed to fall even before his birth. His pride has nothing to do with his fall. It is true that his pride hastens his fall but it is his pride makes him the real tragic hero. The reader may feel temporary dissatisfaction with Oedipus for his pride but his pride leads him to discover the greatest truth of his life and once he succeeds in discovering this truth he punishes himself adequately. At the end we feel that all who were advising Oedipus not to probe into the murder of Liaus were wrong and Oedipus was right.

Oedipus Rex : Moral Lesson in the Play

Oedipus Rex is a play of inexhaustible interest. Literary critics and students of Greek religion in our times continue to turn to it. Anthropologists and Psychologists find it useful as a reflection of an ancient myth and man's unconscious mind. In short, the play continues to be a subject of intensive discussion.

Certain things about it are clearer than others. For instance, it can easily be analysed as a piece of stagecraft; the methods used to arouse the interest and excite the emotions of the audience are evident to the analytical reader. But the meaning or significance of the play has aroused a lot of controversy. Briefly speaking, there are two major considerations regarding this play i. e Sophocles' dramatic craftsmanship, and Sophoclean thought—the former presenting no problem and the latter giving rise to considerable differences of opinion. Most critics have found a profound meaning in the play and they have offered a variety of interpretations ranging from the didacticism of Plutarch to the more complex explanations of the 20th century (such as Freudian, post-Freudian, Marxist, and existentialist).

Matching Wits with the gods: - The plot of this play is a search for knowledge, and its climax is recognition of truth. The hero here is a man whose self-esteem is rooted in his pride of intellect. The gods here manifest themselves not by means of any miracle but by a prediction which is proved true after a long delay. Various formulas have been imposed on this play. For instance, the play has been interpreted to mean that a wicked man is punished, or that an imprudent man pays the price, or that a family curse returns, or that an innocent man is victimised by fate. However, a more appropriate formula would be to say that in this play a man matches wits with the gods. We might even lend universality to this formula by saying that here man (and not a man) matches wits with the gods.

The gods always Win: - The play appears to dramatize the conventional Greek wisdom that, when mortal man vies with the immortal gods, the gods always win. The theme is as old as Homer, who tells this story to illustrate it in the sixth book of the Iliad. In this particular play the specific point of contention is knowledge. This is Sophocles' way of translating the old theme into a form suited to the age of enlightenment and it creates a fine contrast or opposition between knowledge as power and self-knowledge. In short, the awareness that man is less than the gods is undoubtedly an element in the play.

Victory in Defeat: -"Oedipus Tyrannous of Sophocles combines two apparently irreconcilable themes, the greatness of the gods and the greatness of man, and the combination of these themes is inevitably tragic, for the greatness of the gods is most clearly and powerfully demonstrated by man's defeat. The god is great in his laws and he does not grow old. But man does grow old, and not only does he grow old, he also dies. Unlike the gods, he exists in time. The beauty and power of his physical frame is subject to sickness, death, and corruption, the beauty and power of his intellectual, artistic, and social achievement to decline, overthrow, and oblivion. His greatness and beauty arouse in us a pride in their magnificence which is inseparable from and increased by our sorrow over their imminent death. Oedipus is symbolic of all human achievement, his hard-won magnificence, unlike the everlasting magnificence of the divine, cannot last and, while it

lives, shines all the more brilliant against the sombre background of its impermanency. Sophocles' tragedy presents us with a terrible affirmation of man's subordinate position in the universe, and at the same time with a heroic vision of man's victory in defeat. Man is not equated to the gods but man at his greatest, as in Oedipus, is capable of something which the gods cannot experience; the proud tragic view of Sophocles sees in the fragility and inevitable defeat of human greatness the possibility of a purely human heroism to which the gods can never attain, for the condition of their existence is everlasting victory."

The Lesson of Modesty or Self-Restraint: - It might be held that the play teaches us the precept: "know thyself". If we agree, we shall have to support the view that the play is didactic and that Sophocles is a teacher; for what the Delphic maxim just quoted amounts to is a warning to cultivate sophrosyne, a word best translated as modesty or self-restraint. It may be asserted that the play teaches the reader to cultivate the virtue of modesty, or self-restraint, or self-control, or caution. According to a strong supporter of this view, the touchstone by which Oedipus is to be judged is Creon. Creon's "pious moderation" and "modest loyalty" are the ideals against which the arrogance of Oedipus is measured and found to be wrong. If the play teaches the lesson of self-control and self-restraint, then we have to admit that Creon's personality illustrates this virtue. Creon explicitly claims this virtue in one of his speeches. He is at all-time respectful, cautious, and reverent. Even at the end, he insists that he will not exile Oedipus until he is absolutely sure that this is what the gods desire. It is he who points the obvious moral in the last scene, that now perhaps Oedipus will put his faith in the gods. His last, minor dispute with Oedipus is over a question of caution. Oedipus wants to be exiled immediately but Creon will not promise this until the will of the gods is made quite clear. Twice in the course of the play Creon makes a statement that may be taken as his motto. The statement is to the effect that Creon will not do or say anything unless he possesses definite knowledge to justify his doing or saying it.

The Contrast with Creon: - This trait in Creon contrasts him sharply with Oedipus who suffers from the pride of knowledge. Creon shows a desire to avoid the responsibilities of kingship because they are dangerous and painful. Creon would be content instead with public approval and with honours that bring gain. Creon is a just man; he is even a kind man who brings the children in the last scene to meet Oedipus. He is also an innocent man unjustly accused who reacts mildly and seems not to bear any grudge at the end. But he is humdrum and poor spirited and self-satisfied. He is thoroughly decent in his way, but Oedipus with his boldness and intelligence and ease of command is a much greater personality.

The Contrast between Oedipus & Other Main Characters: - The contrast between Oedipus and the other two principal characters is also noteworthy. Tiresias represents and defends the wisdom of the gods in his opposition to human folly. But Tiresias, as a person, stands no comparison with Oedipus. His first words in the play show that Tiresias finds his knowledge unbearable, and he is quite prepared to go back home until Oedipus provokes him to anger. As for Jocasta, she has raised irresponsibility to the status of a principle. Besides, neither Jocasta nor Tiresias is willing to face the truth, while Oedipus is not only willing but determined. Neither Tiresias nor Creon desires the responsibility that comes with office and power, but Oedipus does. Tiresias and Creon are both wiser men than Oedipus and at the end of the play Creon is still

giving to Oedipus a lesson in sophrosyne or self-restraint. But the brilliance and the courage of Oedipus make him a greater man than both Tiresias and Creon.

The True Greatness of Man: - Oedipus may be taken to represent all mankind. He represents also the city which is man's greatest creation. His resurgence in the last scene of the play is a prophetic vision of a defeated Athens which will rise to greatness beyond anything she had attained in victory. In the last scene, we witness a vision of a man superior to the tragic reversal of his action and the terrible success of his search for truth, reasserting his greatness not this time in defiance of the powers which shape human life but in harmony with those powers. In the last scene we see beyond the defeat of man's ambition the true greatness of which only the defeated are capable.

No Moral Lesson: - There is no moral lesson here. No moralist would present human folly in such bright colours and depict wisdom and temperance as dull. The kind of play Sophocles was writing in Oedipus Rex was intrinsically unsuited to be a lesson. The play does not persuade that Creon is a nobler man; it only shows him to be a wiser man. It does offer some comfort to the pious reader, but only a little, though it creates a difficulty for a philosopher like Plato who believed in the unity of human virtues. Nor could this play have pleased humanists of the fifth century, who attached great importance to the human intellect. Here we have a play showing man at his noblest and greatest when he is most foolish and in the very actions which exhibit his folly. We may accept that gratefully as a great artistic triumph, but we should not expect a moral lesson from it.

Blindness in Oedipus Rex

People can be "blinded" to the truth. The answer to their question or solution to their problem may have been obvious. Yet, they could not "see" the answer. They were blinded to the truth. Associations have been made between being blind and enlightened. A blind person is said to have powers to see invisible things. They "see" into the future. The blind may not have physical sight, but they have another kind of vision. In Sophocles' King Oedipus, Tiresias, the blind prophet, presents the truth to King Oedipus and Jocasta. Oedipus has been blinded to the truth his whole life. When he does find the truth, he loses his physical vision. Because of the truth, Oedipus blinds himself. Jocasta was blind to the true identity of Oedipus. Even when she found out the truth, she refused to accept it. In this case, those who are blind ultimately do have a higher vision - the truth.

Kind Oedipus started life with a prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother. In an attempt to avoid this fate, his parents, Laius and Jocasta, sent him into the mountains to die. However, a shepherd saved Oedipus. This shepherd gave Oedipus to Polybus and Merope. When Oedipus learned of his prophecy, he fled his home, thinking these people were his real parents. On his flight, he met Laius. He ended up killing Laius. He continued on, answered a riddle of the evil Sphinx, and ended up king of Thebes. With this kingdom, Oedipus married Jocasta. He had lived out the prophecy without even knowing he had. Thebes fell onto bad times, and a prophet put the blame on a polluter of the lands. Oedipus called on Tiresias, and Tiresias informed him that the

polluter was the King. As Oedipus searched further and further, he discovered that he was the polluter and that the prophecy had come true. When Oedipus finally discovered the truth, he was so distressed that he ran pins into his eyes, blinding himself. He had been blinded to the truth for so long.

Oedipus was blind in more than one way. He was blind to the truth about his own life. Oedipus had no idea that his real parents were Laius and Jocasta. He was so blind that he got mad at anyone who was foolish enough to suggest such an idea. As more and more of the story started to fall into place, Oedipus was forced to open his eyes to the truth. Oedipus did kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus was the person causing the bad times in Thebes. As soon as Oedipus knew and accepted the truth, he blinded himself. Just as Tiresias was blind and open to the truth, so was Oedipus.

Oedipus was also physically blind. Oedipus' physical blindness played into the whole role of the Greek tragedy. The blindness completed the tragedy for Oedipus. Every Greek tragedy was supposed to end with the main characters experiencing their own, personal tragedy. For Oedipus, this tragedy was discovering the truth and becoming blind. It completed the prophecies that Oedipus received from the blind prophet, Tiresias. Tiresias told Oedipus that he had come into Thebes with his sight, but he would leave Thebes without it. Oedipus' physical blindness also left Oedipus to the wrongs of his life. With nothing to look at, Oedipus was forced to think about his life and what had happened. He was forced to deal with it. He had the blackness and the physical pain he had inflicted on himself as reminders and as punishment. Oedipus' physical blindness was just as painful as his blindness to the truth. Both were intertwined in each other.

Jocasta's blindness was different then Oedipus'. She knew about the prophecy, but she thought Oedipus was dead. She had no idea that she had married her son. As pieces of information came to point to the whole truth of the matter, Jocasta refused to accept what had really happened. She realized what had happened, and she knew that she had played a role in them. Her way of dealing with the whole deal was to kill herself. Jocasta's blindness ultimately led to her downfall.

Tiresias' blindness was of the physical nature. Tiresias played the role of the typical prophet in the Greek tragedy. He was physically blind, but he had vision into the future. When he presented the truth to Oedipus, Oedipus attacked his blindness. He told Tiresias that the only reason he was not blaming him for the whole situation was that Tiresias could not see. Oedipus used his blindness to prophesize that Oedipus would leave Thebes blind, poor, and shamed. This statement irritated Oedipus even more. Oedipus began to turn away from the idea of a prophet and seeing into the future. Teiresias' physical blindness led to Oedipus' physical blindness.

Figurative blindness can be harder to deal with then literal blindness. A person who is physically blind knows that he will probably be blind the rest of his life. That person will learn to deal with the blindness. However, if a person is blind to the truth, there is nothing that person can do until they learn the truth. The person may not even know that he is wrong. When the person does learn the truth, he tends to feel ignorant. The person wonders if things could have been avoided had the truth only been known. For Oedipus and Jocasta in Sophocles' King Oedipus, this scenario was just the case. When Oedipus learned the truth, his way of dealing with his figurative blindness was to blind himself. When Jocasta learned the truth, her way of dealing with her figurative blindness

was to kill herself. In this play, blindness led to the truth, and the truth led to blindness. Oedipus, Tiresias, and Jocasta were all blind, yet all found the truth.

Oedipus the King : Reason and Passion

In the play, Oedipus the King, there are dual parts of reason and passion. Oedipus primarily acts with both reason and passion at different stages in the play. There are several points in the play where Oedipus acts with reason. The first such point occurs when he is asked by his followers to help save Thebes. He acts with reason when he immediately decides to heed to their demands and find help for them. However, he may also have been deciding to do this through passion. His need for his land to be perfectly normal might have prompted this immediate decision.

Reason also occurs through the character of Oedipus himself. He has a heroic confidence in his own abilities, and he has good reason for such confidence, both from his own sense of past achievements and from the very high regard everyone has of those achievements. He is conscious of himself as a great man. He feels that he can achieve anything.

The central metaphor in this play is blindness. For the tragic hero is, in a sense, blind from the start, at least in the sense that he is not alert to the fact that the way he sees his situation may not be true, may be only a partial take on the reality of things. Oedipus is not prepared to admit that he might be wrong. Why should he? He has always been right in the past; no one else in Thebes is acting resolutely to meet the crisis, any more than they were when the city was threatened before. His vision may well include a certain narrowness, and yet because he sees the world that way, he is also the one with the most confidence in his own sight and the one most ready to act in accordance with what he sees. The way he sees the world lies at the very source of what makes him a great man now and in the past. Those around him rely upon that confidence in order for the crisis to be dealt with.

It is ironic that the only way that the curse will be lifted from Thebes is by finding the murderer of Laius. Oedipus starts on a powerful trip to find the murderer, and this ends up throwing him into a passionate search within himself to find the truth. Because Oedipus will not compromise, and will only go after the answer to Apollo's requests in one way, this sets him up for a horrific downfall. When Oedipus's reason ends up meeting his passion for finding the murderer, he finds that he is in a whirlpool of bad things that are going to bring him down.

Even when the full truth of what he has done strikes home, he will not abandon his faith in himself but will see himself out to the end. To the very end of this play, Oedipus is still insisting that he is the one who has blinded himself that he will accept his exile that he is fully prepared to accept the self-destructive consequences of what he has done.

Jocasta's attempt to put his mind at rest about killing his father - "don't believe seers, e.g. they were wrong about Laius being killed by his son" - the very thing that starts Oedipus on the suspicion that he is guilty.

Where did Oedipus go wrong? Leaving Corinth? Killing Laius? Marrying Jocasta? Pursuing his identity-search in the play? Certainly the latter, but this not the first, or major mistake.is ill temper, jumping to conclusions as distinctive of Emotion = Dionysus. Oedipus has characteristics both Apollonian and Dionysian.

We have observed that one key to Oedipus's character is that he will not compromise. He must see life through on his own terms, no matter what the cost. He is prepared to acknowledge no authority outside his own will. Hence, if he is to be satisfied the world must answer to him.

As his situation gets more complicated and things do not work out as he has imagined they might, Oedipus does not adapt, change, and learn. He becomes more and more determined to see the problem through on his own terms; he becomes increasingly inflexible.

Having accepted the responsibility for saving Thebes, he will on his own see the matter through, without compromise, without lies, without deceit. Anyone who suggests that he proceed differently is simply an obstacle who must be overcome. That attitude, as we know, leads to the most horrific conclusions.

Oedipus is prepared only to do things in the way he sees fit. Whatever stands in his way he sees as an obstacle that he must overcome publicly, directly, and without compromise. He is anything but a flexible character. His sense of his own worth is so strong that he will not admit of any departure from his characteristic way of doing things. In fact, he is probably incapable of imagining acting in any other manner. He has no ability for the sort of delayed emotional response. Whatever he feels, Oedipus immediately reacts to, usually in public.

What makes Oedipus so compelling is not that he suffers horribly and endures at the end an almost living death. The force of the play comes from the connection between Oedipus's sufferings and his own actions, that is, from the awareness of how he himself is bringing upon his own head the dreadful outcome.

We can say Oedipus is capable of doing what he does because he is uniquely brave, excellent, and intelligent. But the tragedy reminds us, even the best and the bravest, those famous throughout the world for their knowledge, are doomed if they set themselves up against the mystery of life itself and if they try to force life to answer to them, they are going to self-destruct. Oedipus and his reasoning were correct in the way he followed them, but his passion and his ignorance of viewing the world properly led to his horrific downfall.

The Punishment of Oedipus the King

At the end of Oedipus Rex, Oedipus, king of Thebes, ends up banished forever from his kingdom. Additionally, Oedipus physically puts out his own eyes, for several reasons. The question is: Did Oedipus deserve his punishments? There are many factors that must be considered in answering this, including how Oedipus himself felt about his situation. His blinding was as much symbolic as it was physical pain.

It is important to keep in mind the whole basic reasoning for Oedipus' search for Laius' killers: he wished to put an end to a deadly plague, and that plague would only be stopped when said murderer is killed, or driven from the land. Thus, when it is revealed that Oedipus himself murdered Laius, then banishment seems to be the only option. Death, in my mind, is not valid simply because of what it might do to the kingdom's people. Even though it seems that Oedipus has not been a particularly good monarch, in fact his only major accomplishment seems to be killing the Sphinx all those years ago; having a king put to death could have serious repercussions on the rest of the kingdom. So in the end, the only way to cure the plague and keep the kingdom stable seems to be the banishment of Oedipus. In this case, the question of whether or not he deserved to be punished seems irrelevant; Oedipus' only goal was to stop the plague and by leaving, he has accomplished that goal. Banishment was the only choice.

But what exactly was Oedipus being punished for? Even after re- reading the play, this still seems to be a grey area. Incest? Immoral, to be sure, but Oedipus was obviously ignorant to his actions, and to my knowledge, in Sophoclean times, there was no written law against it and therefore no punishment for it. Oedipus' punishment may have been for

killing Laius, but how could you punish someone for being a victim of fate? Greeks believed at the time of the play's writing that a man's life was "woven" by the 3 fates and that he was irrevocably bound to that destiny. Knowing this and knowing that Oedipus became king of Thebes only because it was his destiny to murder Laius and kill the Sphinx, how could he rightfully be punished? Even Oedipus himself knows that his actions are not by choice, but by acts of the gods, he mentions this twice in the play: "Some savage power has brought this down upon my head." As well as "My god, my god -- what have you planned to do to me?" Such quotes clearly show that Oedipus knew that he had no choice in his actions. In this manner and in this manner alone, Oedipus is undeserving of said punishment. Oedipus may not have been a particularly good man, but in the end he knew what was best for his kingdom: "Out of this kingdom cast me with all speed" ...for only that would save his former subjects.

Were that Oedipus' only punishment, the play might have been quite a bit simpler (and this essay quite a bit shorter), but Oedipus, in a fit of rage, stabs his own eyes with Jocasta's dress pins. This was Oedipus' way of trying to punish himself, as well as an escape. Oedipus would no longer gaze upon the faces of his subjects, his brother (uncle?) Creon or even those of his children. He is plunged into a world of darkness. It must be noted that this was more than simply a punishment, though I'm sure that it was one of the ways Oedipus intended it. The physical pain alone seems to prove that. There are much easier ways of becoming blind to the world than stabbing one's eyes out. As we have stated before though, Oedipus was blinded by his foolish pride long before the beginning of the novel. He only realized the truth behind Laius' murder when it was right in front of his nose. He was by no means stupid, in fact he came off as quite a clever man, but his was a world of blindness because of pride and power.

We have been concentrating on the two most obvious of Oedipus' punishments, but there is another one that may not seem so clear. Keeping in mind that Sophocles made it very clear that Oedipus was a man of so much pride that he may have thought himself to be akin to a god, was not Oedipus basically stripped of that pride at the end of the play? The true punishment has been revealed.

Oedipus' life was based on pride. It was what led to the murder of Laius, which in turn led to the killing of the Sphinx, which led to his becoming king. As he continues on his particular thread of life, Oedipus becomes more and more powerful, and as such, his pride also increases proportionately. He threatens both Tiresias and Creon, and single-handedly tries to unravel the mystery of Laius' death. What must go on inside his mind when he finds out that not only did he murder his father, the king, but he also slept with his mother? Knowing full well that his kingdom would eventually find out his acts, how could he hold his head up when walking through the city streets? How could his subjects respect and revere a king who was a murderer and committer of incest? Oedipus is thusly stripped of his pride, the driving force behind his whole personality. He has been crushed, and that which he had so much of before has been denied him. Where he was once at one extreme (hubris), he is now at the other. To take away the very thing that drives a man is worse than any physical pain or even death itself. That is truly, as Sophocles intended it, Oedipus' ultimate punishment.

When the curtain falls and the lights go out on Oedipus Rex, the king's punishments total three. Though in my mind at least, one far outweighs the other two, they are all important and they all contribute to the total experience of the Greek tragedy. In the end, I do not feel that Oedipus truly deserves the punishments he is handed, but that is only because of the fact that I place myself in the time period that this was written in, using the beliefs of that time for my own. Were this story to have taken place in modern times, Oedipus certainly would have deserved his punishment, but this idea is irrelevant because, quite simply, this did not take place in our "advanced" civilization. Oedipus was a victim of fate, incapable of free will, and as such he should have not been punished, save banishment only to cure the plague.

Doctor Faustus

THE RENAISSANCE (1500 -1600)

Meaning and Scope: - Renaissance means the Revival of learning, and it denotes in its broadest sense the gradual enlightenment of the human mind after the darkness of the Middle Ages. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 A.D. by the invasion of the Turks, the Greek scholars who were residing there, spread all over Europe, and brought with them invaluable Greek manuscripts. The discovery of these classical models resulted in the Revival of learning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The essence of this movement was that "man discovered himself and the universe", and that "man so long .blinded had suddenly opened his eyes and seen". The flood of Greek literature which the new art of printing carried swiftly to every school in Europe revealed a new world of poetry and philosophy. Along with the Revival of learning, new discoveries took place in several other fields. Vascoda Gama circumnavigated the earth; Columbus discovered America; Copernicus discovered the Solar System and prepared the way for Galileo. Books were printed; and philosophy science, and art were systemized.

The chief characteristic of the Renaissance was its emphasis on Humanism, which means man's concern with himself as an object of contemplation. This movement was started in Italy by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, and from there it spread to other countries of Europe. In England it became popular during the Elizabethan period. This movement which focused its interest on 'the proper study of mankind' had a number of subordinate trends.

Spirit of Discovery: - The second important aspect of Humanism was the discovery of the external universe, and its significance for man, but more important than this was that the writers directed their gaze inward, and became deeply interested in the problems of human personality. In the medieval morality plays, the characters are mostly personifications; Friendship, Charity, Wickedness and the like. This tendency led to the rise of a new literary form "the Essay", which was used successfully by Bacon. In drama Marlowe probed down into the deep recesses of the human passion. His heroes, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus and Barabas, the Jew of Malta, are possessed of uncontrolled ambitions. Shakespeare, a more consummate artist, carried Humanism to perfection. His genius, fed by the spirit of the Renaissance, enabled him to see life whole, and to present it in all its aspects.

Another aspect of Humanism was the enhanced sensitiveness to formal beauty, and the cultivation of the aesthetic sense. It showed itself in a new ideal of social conduct, that of the courtier. An Italian diplomat and man of letters, Castiglione, wrote a treatise entitled Cortigiano (The Courtier) where he sketched the pattern of gentlemanly behavior and manners upon which the conduct of such men as Sir Phillip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh was modeled. This cult of elegance in prose writing produced the ornate style called Euphuism by Lyly. Though it suffered from exaggeration and pedantry, yet it introduced order and balance in English prose, and gave it pithiness and harmony.

Men's actions:- Another aspect of Humanism was that men came to be regarded as responsible for their own actions, as Cassius says to Brutus in Julius Caesar:-

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Instead of looking up to some higher authority, as was done in The Middle Ages, during the Renaissance Period guidance was to be found from within. Lyly wrote his romance of

Euphues not, merely as an exercise in a new kind of prose, but with the serious purpose of inculcating righteousness of living based on self-control. Sidney wrote his Arcadia in the form of fiction in order to expound an ideal of moral excellence.

Elizabethan Drama: - One of the results of the humanist teaching in the schools and universities had been a great development of the study of Latin drama and the growth of the practice of acting Latin plays by Terence, Plautus and Seneca, and also of contemporary works both in Latin and in English. These performances were the work of amateur actors, school boys or students of the Universities and the Inns of Court, and were often given in honour of the visits of royal persons or ambassadors. Their significance lies in the fact that they brought the educated classes in touch with a much more highly developed kind, of drama, than the older English play. About the middle of the sixteenth century some academic writers made attempts to write original plays in English on the Latin model. The three important plays of this type are Nicholas Uall's Ralph Roister Moister, John Still's Grammar Gurton's Needle, and Thomas Sackville's Gorbodue or Ferrel- and Porrer–the first two are comedies and last one a tragedy. All these plays are monotonous and do not possess much literary merit.

The University Wits: - The second period of Elizabethan drama was dominated by the "University Wits", a professional set of literary men. Of this little constellation, Marlowe was the central sun, and round him revolved as minor stars, Lyly, Greene, Peele, Lodge and .Nash.

(a) Lyly (1554-1606) the author of Euphue:3, wrote a number of plays the best known of them are Compaspe. (1581), Sapho and Phao (1584), Endymion (1591), and Midas (1592). These plays are mythological and pastoral and are nearer to the Masque (court spectacles intended to satisfy the love of glitter and novelty) rather than to the narrative drama of Marlowe. They are written in prose intermingled with verse. Though the verse is simple and charming prose is marred by exaggeration, a characteristic of Euphuism.

(b)George. Peele (155.8-97?), formed, along with Marlowe, Greene and Nash, one of that band of dissolute young men endeavoring to earn a livelihood by literary work. He was an actor as well as a writer of plays. He wrote some half dozen plays, which are richer in beauty than any of his group except Marlowe. His earnest work is the Arrangement of Paris, (1584); his most famous is David Und Bathsheba (1599). The Arrangment of Paris., which contains an elaborate eulogy, of Queen Elizabeth, is really a court play of the Masque order. David and Bathsheba contains many beautiful lines. Like Marlowe, Peels was responsible for giving the blank verse musical quality, which- later attained perfection in the deft hands of Shakespeare.

(c)Thomas Kyd (1558-95) achieved great popularity with his first work, The Spanish Tragedy, which was translated in many European languages. He introduced the blood and thunder' element in drama, which proved one of the attractive features of the pre-Shakespearean drama. Though he is always violent and extravagant, yet he is responsible for breaking away from the lifeless monotony of Gorbodue.

(d)Greene (1560-1592). He lived a most dissoluted life, and died in distress and debt. His plays comprise Orlando Furioso, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, alphonous King of Aragon and George a Greene. His most effective play is Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, which deals partly with the trick of the Friar, and partly with as simple love story between two men with one maid. Its variety of interest and comic, relief add to the

entertainment of the audience. But the chief merit of the play lies in the lively method of presenting the story. Greene also achieves distinction by the vigorous humanity of his characterisation.

(e) Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1593). The dramatic work of Lodge and Nash is not of much importance of all the members of the group Marlowe is the greatest. In 1587 hi; first. play Tamburlaine was produced and it took the public by storm on account of its impetuous force, its splendid command of blank verse, and its sensitiveness to beauty. In this play Marlowe dramatised the exploits of the Scythian shepherd who rose to be "the terror of the world", and "the scourge of God" Tamburlaine was succeeded by The Tragical _History Doctor Faustus, in which Marlowe gave an old medieval legend a romantic setting. The story of the scholar who sells his soul to the Devil for worldly enjoyment and unlimited power, is presented in a most fascinating manner Marlowe's Faustus is the genuine incarnation of the Renaissance spirit. The Jew of Malta, the third tragedy of Marlowe, is not so fine as Doctor Faustus, though it has a glorious opening. His last play, Edward II, is his best from the technical point of view. Though it lacks the force and rhythmic beauty of the earlier plays, it is superior to them on account Of its rare skill of construction and admirable characterisation.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564-1593)

Christopher Marlowe was born in 1564, the year of William Shakespeare's birth. His father worked in Canterbury, England, as a cobbler, and Christopher was one of many children to be born into their middle-class household (Bakeless 3-30.) After attending the King's School on a scholarship, he won another scholarship to attend Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Marlowe completed his BA degree in four years and then stayed on at Cambridge to work towards an MA. Students who did so were granted an extended scholarship-and were expected to take Holy Orders.

During the following three years, Marlowe began to absent himself from the college for weeks on end. Although such absences were not uncommon among BA students, Marlowe's spotty attendance seems to have earned the ire of the college administration. Rumors arose that Marlowe planned to defect to the Catholic seminary of Rheims, France. Amidst such rumors, it became a matter of the Queen's Council that Marlowe should receive his degree at graduation--the Privy Council conveyed to the college that Marlowe had been in government service all along. The evidence suggests that he had been serving England as a spy in Rheims.

When Marlowe left Cambridge in 1587, it was to write for the stage. Before the end of the year, both parts of his Tamburlaine were produced in London. The plays basked in a decidedly popular and vernacular spirit. Renaissance scholar David Riggs notes that the chaotic stage of Tamburlaine, featuring a blasphemer and murderer protagonist, "challenged the limits of public behavior" (220). In any case, Marlowe's debut earned him an excellent standing among contemporary playwrights. His plays, of a quality astonishing for a man in his twenties, constantly produced crowd-pleasing spectacles. In the following six years before his early death, Marlowe continued to achieve success through such works as Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta, and The Massacre at Paris.

The last part of Marlowe's life was violent and contains some suspicious coincidences. While living near London in 1592, a year before his death, scholar Lisa Hopkins reports that Marlowe appeared so threatening and was thought so dangerous by two constables

of the town of Shoreditch (the suburb in which Marlowe lived and where the theatres for which he wrote were located) that they formally appealed for protection from him. As many researchers of Marlowe's life have noted, it is puzzling what a person must do in order to make the police afraid of him. In September of that same year Marlowe was involved in a fight in his native Canterbury, attacking Williame Corkine with a sword and dagger. This year, too, was the one in which Marlowe's good friend Thomas Watson died. There is the possibility that during this time Marlowe had a relationship with Thomas Walsingham, nephew of the Sir Thomas Walsingham who was the head of the spies in Queen Elizabeth's service. However, the relationship is by no means proved. It is a matter of record, however, that Marlowe was staying at Walsingham's country house in Scadbury at the time he was killed.

The circumstances of Marlowe's death provide much for speculation. On May 30, 1593, when Marlowe was only twenty-nine, he was feasting in a rented private room in a Deptford house (the home of Dame Eleanor Bull, not a tavern as is often recounted) with a group of four men. He reportedly quarreled with Ingram Friser (the personal servant of Sir Thomas Walsingham), who killed Marlowe on the spot by stabbing him above the right eye. Friser claimed self-defense and was pardoned shortly thereafter, despite the mysterious circumstances. David Riggs points out that the Queen herself had ordered Marlowe's death four days before (334). Was the Friser incident merely a coincidence? And how had Marlowe earned the anger of the Queen?

Two days after Marlowe's death, a man named Richard Baines sent a document to the police accusing Marlowe of blasphemy and homosexuality. Among other things, the document recounts Marlowe's barely concealed atheism, his public denouncement of faith, and his sacrilegious speech against Jesus himself. The document also notes that Marlowe was not content merely to keep these opinions to himself; at every opportunity, he supposedly tried to win men over to his views. His allegedly heretical views were in fact already known to the government. When the famous playwright Thomas Kyd-Marlowe's former roommate-was arrested in possession of blasphemous papers, Kyd confessed that he had received the documents from Marlowe. Seen in this light, the Queen's order and Marlowe's consequent death seem to be of a piece. Harold Bloom is convinced that Marlowe was "eliminated with maximum prejudice by Walsingham's Elizabethan Secret Service" (10.)

If these events are linked, the details remain obscure. Allegations abound. Men reported that Marlowe was cruel, violent, homosexual, and foul-mouthed, cursing all the way to his last breath. Although these reports cannot be discounted easily, little conclusive evidence supports any of these allegations. As J. B. Steane puts it, "as for Marlowe the man, atheist and rebel or not, we have to acknowledge that there is no single piece of evidence that is not hearsay-only that there is a good deal of it, that it is reasonably consistent, and that on the other side there is no single fact or piece of hearsay known to us" (16). Who was Marlowe, really?

Further complicating our picture of Marlowe is the relationship between author and work. Marlowe's works have been interpreted as atheistic and blasphemous; they also have been understood as traditional and Christian. The two sides stand apart in their proximity to any picture of Marlowe's personal life. To be sure, an author does not necessarily (if ever) write through autobiography or self-expression, or to communicate an ideological position. Yet, it is significant that the young poet, dead before his thirties, is a man who studied to take Holy Orders, who likely served his country in espionage

missions, and who died violently under the taint of scandal. Such a colorful and ambiguous character cannot help but loom behind Marlowe's work. Where biography has relevance for literary interpretation, readers can profit from meeting the challenge of seeing Marlowe's plays from the perspective of his life; at the same time, one should remember that his works were intended for English audiences who did not know as much about his life.

Historical Perspective of Drama before Marlowe

The Greek Drama

In order to fully grasp the rise and content of the English drama, we must peer into the dim past and retrace our steps to the early days of ancient Greece. The beginnings of drama in general get lost in the 'mimes' or crude performances of the Dorian Greeks in honour of Dionysus, the God of Wine, whose name stood for carousal, revelry and merriment.

The addition of dialogue to the dumb mimicry marked an important stage, but it required yet the infusion of action into the dialogue to complete the transformation. This crude drama of the Greeks was a commentary upon the lives and manners, not of human beings, but of the pantheon of gods and other mythological persons: it dealt with things of heaven, not with the problems of mundane existence. But its tone and treatment were generally comic. It was this farcical element that led, by devious and zig-zag paths, to the rise of the famous Athenian Comedy. The supernatural theme made room for the human. The ludicrous representation of the heavenly life which they combined to produce an essentially secular mind, but the religious elements were not altogether done away with. The drama, we may say, was brought down from the heavenly heights to suit the earthly needs.

In the days of Aristotle, the Greek drama almost completed its process of growth and received some final touches at the hands of this master-mind. It gathered all those attributes which constitute its distinctive marks. Two characteristics distinguished it mainly, the Chorus and the Unities. The Chorus was a band of singers and dancers who played in concert and sang odes to the God of Wine, and sometimes followed up the music with a lively dialogue. This dialogue came to supplant in the long run, the musical part of the performance. "The lack of scenery and of stage effect was made up for by descriptions and explanations sung by the Chorus and the limitations imposed by the three unities were met in a similar manner. The Chorus served to give a break and relief in the gloomy and often tragic monotony of the Greek drama. The Shakespearean devices of relieving tragedy by a comic element would not have been admissible."

The Chorus was as old as the drama itself, but the rules of the Unities began with Aristotle. He observed that good plays must conform to these rules and must observe the three Unities of Time, Place and Action—

(i) The Unity of Time. The duration of the action or story must not exceed 24 hours.

(ii) The Unity of Place. The incidents of the drama must be represented in an unbroken link: the scene should be invariable and should not be so located that the dramatis personae are unable to visit it in the time allotted for the duration of the play.

(iii) The Unity of Action. The main interest or plot of the story should be uninterrupted and its course should not be deflected by side-issues and minor plots or incidents. The unity of action must be smooth and straight; all characters and scenes must directly contribute to it.

In addition to the 'Unities', Aristotle touched upon the form of the drama and divided it into five parts:—

(i) The Exposition. This constitutes the opening of the play; the characters are introduced to the audience and are portrayed in their respective situations which gradually work up to the dramatic action.

(ii) The Rising Action i.e., the development of the dramatic situation from the incidents in the Exposition and the gradual rise of the pitch in the dramatic plot.

(iii) The Crisis or Climax. This is the highest pitch in the drama, the turning point in the plot. It represents the effect of the incidents which have already taken their rise in the Exposition and have passed through the second stage. It marks the culmination of the dramatic action and is followed by a lowering of the tone in the play.

(iv) The Descending or Falling Action, in which the action is toned down to a lower pitch.

(v) The Denouement or Catastrophe or Solution, where the various forces in the dramatic action converge towards the solution of the plot.

The Drama and the Christian Church: - In its days of decadence, the art of drama fell into the hands of wandering minstrels called **Jongleur** who travelled from place to place and visited the courts of kings as well as the village greens. Their art consisted in a crude representation of the life and manners of that age, but it did not achieve a height of excellence

In the 9th century A.D. or thereabouts, the dramatic stage shifted from the village green to the altar of the church. The churchmen saw in the stage an effective means of the propagation of Christianity and succeeded in substituting a religious theme for the secular art of the Jongleurs. Certain striking episodes in the life of Jesus Christ were cast into a dramatic form—his Birth, Crucifixion, Resurrection and many others—and these were represented on the stage on appropriate occasions. The drama thus became the handmaid of Christianity.

The Altar and the Stage: - There was another swing of the pendulum. The church could not keep up the vigour of the art which the Jongleurs had exhibited and there was a return to the village green. The Churchmen tried their best to suppress this secular tendency. The village green or the market square now became the scene of the simple plays, mainly based on Biblical themes, and called the Miracle and Mystery plays. The Elizabethan drama is usually considered to be a development of these. "Miracles" and "Mysteries," and it is more than probable that Shakespeare witnessed the performance of some of these. The Creation of the world, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Birth of Christ, and Resurrection were some of the commonest themes of these 'Miracles.'

The Didactic Drama: "Moralities" or Allegorical Plays: - The next stage in the growth of the drama was the change from the religious to the didactic theme. The latter half of the 14th century witnessed a strong wave of allegorical influence throughout Europe, and the dramatic art could not but put on the colour and catch the tone of the times. A new type of drama—the Allegorical plays or the Moralities—came into being. Characters in these plays were not human beings, but abstract qualities like Vice, Virtue, Avarice, Pride, Ignorance, Love, Mercy, Justice, Life, Death etc. The object of the Moralities was wholly didactic: the eternal warfare of evil and good, the struggle of Truth against Falsehood and a dramatic representation of the interaction of human misery and happiness formed the theme of these plays. The Moralities had a happy innovation in the shape of comic element. Satan was represented as a low jocular buffoon who kept the audience in a 'fit of mirth.' The introduction of the seeds of Comedy and the new romantic treatment of the theme were a happy relief to the otherwise serious monotony and dryness of the Moralities. (The Cradle of Security, Hit the Nail on the Head, Second Shepherd's Play were some of the famous Moralities).

The **Morality play** was a distinct **improvement upon the Miracle play**. The Miracle Play was purely religious in character while the Morality Play was chiefly concerned with human nature. The latter dealt with morals and the eternal conflict between the forces of good and evil and with the misery that emanates from vice. The theme of the Miracle Play was superhuman, while that of the Moralities was mainly human and earthly. The Miracle Play left no room for originality; its subject-matter was borrowed from the Bible; the rough-and-ready incidents from the Old Testament supplied abundant material so that the dramatic genius of inventing new plots and sub-plots could not be brought to play. The Moralities, on the other hand, gave free rein to the fertile imagination of the playwright. He could invent a new scheme as well as draw upon the old sources. The addition of the comic element proved the way for the Elizabethan comedy, and provided a short spell of mirth and sunshine in the dull and irksome monotony of the Miracles. The Miracle Play, however, had one advantage over the Morality in that the characters who figured in the Miracle Play had distinct individualities, whereas the Morality dealt with abstractions, the personification of abstract qualities.

Interludes and Comedies (Secular Drama): - The importance of the comic element in the Moralities has been emphasised above. It was at first employed to relieve the dreary monotony of the play, but soon it outgrew its function and expanded into a regular dramatic composition. This comic element or the Interlude as it was often called was the mother of the later Elizabethan comedy. The Interludes were short lively pieces, with characters mostly drawn from real life, though these characters still represented types rather than individuals. But they formed a happy transition from the bare abstractions of the Moralities to the clear-cut individualistic characterisation of the Shakespearean play. The Interludes gave an impetus to the growth of regular drama. They emphasised the element of diversion just for its own sake and offered a contrast to the religious motive of the Miracle Plays or the didactic of the Moralities. The range of subjects grew; the life and manners of the contemporary age came to be reflected truthfully. "Moreover there was now arising the feeling of the need for division on the classical model into regular acts and scenes, and with the Interludes now claiming independent existence, a rough and ready division may be made of Tragedy, Comedy, and plays which are a mixture of both."

English Drama and the Renaissance: - At this time, Europe was animated by a new spirit and fresh ideals. The wonderful Renaissance Movement kicked the slumbering continent into energy. The Muses bore the torch of new knowledge to all parts of Europe. This Revival of Learning brought in its train a passionate zeal for the classical literature of Greece and Rome. It had its influence on the English stage too. The "Miracles'', "Mysteries" and the "Moralities" were driven out by a new type of drama which took its rise in Oxford and Cambridge and derived its inspiration from Greece and Rome. English dramas came to be written on the classical model; of these all, Gorboduc was the most striking example. It was based on the tragedies of the illustrious Seneca and it contained all the traits of the Greek drama—the Chorus, the three Unities and the division of the dramatic action into five parts. Many plays belong to this period of infancy of the English stage e.g.

(i) Ralph Roister Doister, a comedy written by Nicholas Udall in 1550-51, but actually published in 1566.

(ii) Gorbodue or Ferrex and Porrex (1562), tragedy.

(iii) Damon and Pythias, (1564) a tragi-comedy by Richard Edwards, based upon the classical mythology.

The Renaissance, combined with the Reformation, tended to produce the Romantic drama. To this drama, therefore, we should now turn.

The Romantic Drama of the Renaissance or the Elizabethan Age: - The Romantic drama was a product of the Elizabethan age. The English dramatists, after a few experiments on the classical model, noted above, altogether discarded the three unities. The classical drama was followed in two ways: (a) a dignified form and (b) a luxuriant expression. The treatment of the English drama grew to be romantic rather than classical. The three unities of time, place and action were not observed, so that an English play of this period could cover an indefinite period of time, the action could "move from place to place" and subsidiary plots or by-plots could exist side by side with the main plot. Thus in King Lear, Othello and some other plays we notice sub-plots running alongwith the main thread of the story.

The Praise of Marlowe among the University Wits: - Christopher Marlowe, though the youngest of the University Wits and the earliest to die, except for Robert Greene, was the most important among them in the world of drama; he is still regarded as the mighty and wonderful dramatic genius who gave to the English tragic drama a permanent direction and life. He collaborated with some of his fellows and most probably was associated with Shakespeare. "It has been suggested from internal evidence that he was the part-author of Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus. He perhaps also wrote parts of Henry VI, which Shakespeare revised and completed, and of Edward III." Be that as it may, the four plays, all tragedies that make Marlowe foremost among the predecessors of Shakespeare are Tamburlaine, Parts I and II, The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II.

Marlowe: A Typical Product of the Renaissance: - Renaissance, which literally means 're-birth' or 're-awakening' is the name of a Europe-wide movement which closes the trammels and conventions of the medieval age and makes for liberation in all aspects of life and culture.

Though the influence of the spirit of the Renaissance marks all the writers of the latter half of the age of Elizabeth,—in poetry, drama, and prose romances and novels, that can be seen working with particular force on Marlowe and his fellows who together are called the University Wits. Of them again, the writings of Marlowe are the most prominent embodiment of the spirit of the Renaissance. Generally speaking, Marlowe himself is the spirit of Renaissance incarnate. A reckless Bohemian in life, a daring atheist setting not much value on moral worth but all value on the Machiavellian virtue, living a life of imagination rather than of thought, of gaiety full of the zest for life, Marlowe is the typical product of the Renaissance. In the conception of the central characters of his dramas, he is impelled by the Renaissance spirit for unlimited power, unlimited knowledge for the sake of power, unlimited wealth, again, for the sake of power. Aspirations, unbounded desire of love for the pleasures of the senses, infinite longing for beauty rather than for truth—these are the characteristics of the imaginative life which glittered before his eyes in that great age of daring adventures. On the aesthetic side, love of physical beauty mentioned above goes in him hand in hand with love of the beauty of harmony; the high astounding terms of his blank verse, the thrills and echoes of his phrases, the resounding roll of his declamations, the surfeit of mythological allusions—all these run into excess; but the excesses only point to the essential ambition of reaching beyond the narrow and the limited into the infinity of achievement, which is the noblest gift of the Renaissance.

Doctor Faustus : Background

Marlowe lived in a time of great transformation for Western Europe. New advances in science were overturning ancient ideas about astronomy and physics. The discovery of the Americas had transformed the European conception of the world. Increasingly available translations of classical texts were a powerful influence on English literature and art. Christian and pagan worldviews interacted with each other in rich and often paradoxical ways, and signs of that complicated interaction are present in many of Marlowe's works. England, having endured centuries of civil war, was in the middle of a long period of stability and peace.

Not least of the great changes of Marlowe's time was England's dramatic rise to world power. When Queen Elizabeth came to power in 1558, six years before Marlowe's birth, England was a weak and unstable nation. Torn by internal strife between Catholics and Protestants, an economy in tatters, and unstable leadership, England was vulnerable to invasion by her stronger rivals on the continent. By the time of Elizabeth's death in 1603, she had turned the weakling of Western Europe into a power of the first rank, poised to become the mightiest nation in the world. When the young Marlowe came to London looking to make a life in the theatre, England's capitol was an important center of trade, learning, and art. As time passed, the city's financial, intellectual, and artistic importance became still greater, as London continued its transformation from unremarkable center of a backwater nation to one of the world's most exciting metropolises. Drama was entering a golden age, to be crowned by the glory of Shakespeare. Marlowe was a great innovator of blank verse, unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter. The richness of his dramatic verse anticipates Shakespeare, and some argue that Shakespeare's achievements owed considerable debt to Marlowe's influence.

Like the earlier play, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus is a play of deep questions concerning morality, religion, and man's relationship to both. England was a Protestant country since

the time of Queen Elizabeth I's father, Henry VIII. Although theological and doctrinal differences existed between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, the former still inherited a wealth of culture, thought and tradition from the latter. Christianity was a mix of divergent and often contradictory influences, including the religious traditions of the Near East, the heritage of classical Greco-Roman thought and institutions, mystery religions, and north European superstition and magic.

Sorcery and magic were part of widespread belief systems throughout Europe that predated Christianity. These early beliefs about magic were inextricable from folk medicine. Women in particular used a mix of magic and herbal medicine to treat common illnesses. But as Christianity spread and either assimilated or rejected other belief systems, practitioners of magic came to be viewed as evil. In the fifth century CE, St. Augustine, perhaps the most influential Christian thinker after St. Paul, pronounced all sorcery to be the work of evil spirits, to distinguish it from the good "magic" of Christian ritual and sacrament. The view of the sorcerer changed irrevocably. Magic was devil-worship, outside the framework of Church practice and belief, and those who practiced it were excommunicated and killed.

The Protestant Reformation did not include reform of this oppressive and violent practice. Yet magic continued to keep a hold on people's imaginations, and benign and ambiguous views of magic continued to exist in popular folklore. The conceptions of scholarship further complicated the picture, especially after the Renaissance. Scholars took into their studies subjects not considered scientific by today's standards: astrology, alchemy, and demonology. Some of these subjects blurred the lines between acceptable pursuit of knowledge and dangerous heresy.

As this new Christian folklore of sorcery evolved, certain motifs rose to prominence. Once Christ was rejected, a sorcerer could give his soul to the devil instead, receiving in exchange powers in this life, here and now. Numerous Christian stories feature such bargains, and one of the most famous evolved around the historical person Johanned Faustus, a German astrologer of the early sixteenth century. Marlowe took his plot from an earlier German play about Faustus, but he transformed an old story into a powerhouse of a work, one that has drawn widely different interpretations since its first production. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is first great version of the story, although not the last. In the nineteenth century, the great German writer Johann Wolfgang van Goethe gave the story its greatest incarnation in Faust. Faustus' name has become part of our language. "Faustian bargain" has come to mean a deal made for earthly gain at a high ethical and spiritual cost, or alternately any choice with short-lived benefits and a hell of a price.

The chronology of Marlowe's plays is uncertain. Doctor Faustus's composition may have immediately followed Tamburlaine, or may not have come until 1592.

Two versions of the play were printed, neither during Marlowe's life. The 1604 version is shorter (1517 lines), and until the twentieth century was considered the authoritative text. The 1616 version is longer (2121 lines), but the additions were traditionally thought to have been written by other playwrights. Twentieth century scholarship argues that the B text (of 1616) is in fact closer to the original, though possibly with some censorship. The Penguin Books edition used for this study guide uses the longer B text as the basis while incorporating sections of A that are recognizably superior.

Doctor Faustus : Summary

Doctor Faustus, a talented German scholar at Wittenburg, rails against the limits of human knowledge. He has learned everything he can learn, or so he thinks, from the conventional academic disciplines. All of these things have left him unsatisfied, so now he turns to magic. A Good Angle and an Evil Angel arrive, representing Faustus' choice between Christian conscience and the path to damnation. The former advises him to leave off this pursuit of magic, and the latter tempts him. From two fellow scholars, Valdes and Cornelius, Faustus learns the fundamentals of the black arts. He thrills at the power he will have, and the great feats he'll perform. He summons the devil Mephistopheles. They flesh out the terms of their agreement, with Mephistopheles representing Lucifer. Faustus will sell his soul, in exchange for twenty-four years of power, with Mephistopheles as servant to his every whim.

In a comic relief scene, we learn that Faustus' servant Wagner has gleaned some magic learning. He uses it to convince Robin the Clown to be his servant.

Before the time comes to sign the contract, Faustus has misgivings, but he puts them aside. Mephistopheles returns, and Faustus signs away his soul, writing with his own blood. The words "Homo fuge" ("Fly, man) appear on his arm, and Faustus is seized by fear. Mephistopheles distracts him with a dance of devils. Faustus requests a wife, a demand Mephistopheles denies, but he does give Faustus books full of knowledge.

Some time has passed. Faustus curses Mephistopheles for depriving him of heaven, although he has seen many wonders. He manages to torment Mephistopheles, he can't stomach mention of God, and the devil flees. The Good Angel and Evil Angel arrive again. The Good Angel tells him to repent, and the Evil Angel tells him to stick to his wicked ways. Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles return, to intimidate Faustus. He is cowed by them, and agrees to speak and think no more of God. They delight him with a pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, and then Lucifer promises to show Faustus hell. Meanwhile, Robin the Clown has gotten one of Faustus' magic books.

Faustus has explored the heavens and the earth from a chariot drawn by dragons, and is now flying to Rome, where the feast honoring St. Peter is about to be celebrated. Mephistopheles and Faustus wait for the Pope, depicted as an arrogant, decidedly unholy man. They play a series of tricks, by using magic to disguise themselves and make themselves invisible, before leaving.

The Chorus returns to tell us that Faustus returns home, where his vast knowledge of astronomy and his abilities earn him wide renown. Meanwhile, Robin the Clown has also learned magic, and uses it to impress his friend Rafe and summon Mephistopheles, who doesn't seem too happy to be called.

At the court of Charles V, Faustus performs illusions that delight the Emperor. He also humiliates a knight named Benvolio. When Benvolio and his friends try to avenge the humiliation, Faustus has his devils hurt them and cruelly transform them, so that horns grow on their heads.

Faustus swindles a Horse-courser, and when the Horse-courser returns, Faustus plays a frightening trick on him. Faustus then goes off to serve the Duke of Vanholt. Robin the Clown, his friend Dick, the Horse-courser, and a Carter all meet. They all have been

swindled or hurt by Faustus' magic. They go off to the court of the Duke to settle scores with Faustus.

Faustus entertains the Duke and Duchess with petty illusions, before Robin the Clown and his band of ruffians arrives. Faustus toys with them, besting them with magic, to the delight of the Duke and Duchess.

Faustus' twenty-four years are running out. Wagner tells the audience that he thinks Faustus prepares for death. He has made his will, leaving all to Wagner. But even as death approaches, Faustus spends his days feasting and drinking with the other students. For the delight of his fellow scholars, Faustus summons a spirit to take the shape of Helen of Troy. Later, an Old Man enters, warning Faustus to repent. Faustus opts for pleasure instead, and asks Mephistopheles to bring Helen of Troy to him, to be his love and comfort during these last days. Mephistopheles readily agrees.

Later, Faustus tells his scholar friends that he is damned, and that his power came at the price of his soul. Concerned, the Scholars exit, leaving Faustus to meet his fate.

As the hour approaches, Mephistopheles taunts Faustus. Faustus blames Mephistopheles for his damnation, and the devil proudly takes credit for it. The Good and Evil Angel arrive, and the Good Angel abandons Faustus. The gates of Hell open. The Evil Angel taunts Faustus, naming the horrible tortures seen there.

The Clock strikes eleven. Faustus gives a final, frenzied monologue, regretting his choices. At midnight the devils enter. As Faustus begs God and the devil for mercy, the devils drag him away. Later, the Scholar friends find Faustus' body, torn to pieces.

Epilogue. The Chorus emphasizes that Faustus is gone, his once-great potential wasted. The Chorus warns the audience to remember his fall, and the lessons it offers.

Marlowe's Contribution to English Drama

Tragedy before Marlow: Swinburne's remarks, "Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was paved for Shakespeare." With the advent of Marlowe, Miracle and Morality plays vanished. He brought Drama out of the old rut of street presentation and made it a perfect art and a thing of beauty. After the Reformation, the Mystery and Morality plays were disliked by the public at large until the advent of University Wits the greatest of whom was Marlowe.

It was in the fifteenth century that tragedy came to English dramatic field. This was due to the Revival of Learning in Europe commonly referred to as the Renaissance and the translation of great Italian tragedies. Italian Renaissance exercised a vital influence on the development of English Drama. The first English tragedy was Gorbodue (1565) by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville. In style and treatment of theme Seneca was very much their model. Although this tragedy showed some innovation, yet most of the Senecan qualities such as long speeches, ghosts, gruesome murders and talks and talks were very much there. The tragedies that followed Seneca had the same qualities and properties. It required the mighty efforts of a genius to free the Elizabethan Drama from the worst features of the Senecan tragedies and it was Christopher Marlowe who has achieved this foundation for the realm of English Dramatic Literature. There are umpteen characteristic of Marlovian tragedies. In discussing Marlowe, we can point out how he formulated the English Drama and especially Tragedy which was improved upon and perfected by a genius like Shakespeare who owes Marlowe for all his greatness and grandeur. Because had there been no Marlowe, there would have been no Shakespeare. It is also due to Marlowe that English Drama for the first time was bestirred with the vigorous poetry and passion. He has rightly been called the Morning Star of English Drama.

Marlow's Great Tragic Heroes: The first great thing done by Marlowe was to break away from the medieval conception of Tragedy. The Medieval Drama was a game of the princes and imperial classes – the kings and Queens and their rise and fall. But it was left to Marlowe to evolve and create the real tragic hero. All of his tragic heroes are of humble parentage, Tamburlaine, Barabas in the Jew of Malta and Faustus, but they are endowed with great tragic and heroic qualities. His tragedy is a tragedy of one man – his rise and fall, his fate and actions and finally his death for his own failings and incapacities. All the other characters fade into insignificance besides the towering personality and the glory and grandeur of the tragic hero. Even various incidents revolve round the hero. His heroes are men fired with indomitable passion and inordinate ambition. His Tamburlaine is in full-flooded pursuit of military and political power, his Faustus sells his soul to the Devil to attain ultimate power through knowledge and gain the deity and His Jew of Malta discards all sense of human values with his blind aspirations. What Marlowe depicts and dramatizes is that all his mighty and towering heroes with all their sky-high designs and aspirations ultimately fall into failure and doom exhibiting their tragic and doomed end. Herein lies the greatness of Marlowe.

Working of a passion: We have previously studied that Marlowe's heroes are dominated by the inordinate desires and passions. These passions take the form of wealth, spirit of learning, high power. Through these, Marlowe imparts vehemence, fire and force in the drama. But in this way, we may trace the distinct influence of Machiavelli on Marlowe. Marlowe must have read his famous book, The Prince and

derived this idea of ambition and spirit from him. Marlowe discarded the old concept of tragedy as decent from greatness to misery and supplanted it greatness by the greatness of individual worth. His heroes truly reflect the new Spirit of Learning because he himself was the product of Renaissance.

The Inner Conflict: Another great achievement of Marlowe was to introduce the element of conflict in the tragic hero especially in Doctor Faustus and Edward II. The conflict may be on the physical or spiritual plane. The spiritual and moral conflict takes place in the heart of man and this is of much greater significance and much more poignant than the former. And a great tragedy most powerfully reveals the emotional conflict or moral agony of the mighty hero. In the realm of England's dramatic literature, Doctor Faustus may be reckoned the first spiritual tragedy or the tragedy of the soul. In this epoch-making drama, true and deep moral agonies and painful spiritual conflict has been superbly laid bare before us by Marlowe. Like the old Greek heroes, Marlovian Heroes are not helpless puppets in the hands of Fate and they are never destined by gods. They have free thinking of religion and carve their way themselves. The tragic end they meet is caused by the tragic flaw in their personalities and they achieve this end through their actions. This is the greatest contribution of Marlowe to the English Drama.

Moral Conception: It was Marlowe who first discarded the medieval conception of tragedy as it was distinctly a moral one. In old Morality Plays, the purpose was to simply inculcate a moral lesson by showing the fall of the hero. There is no such thing in Marlovian plays. The main interest centers on the sky-touching personality of the heroes with their tremendous efforts to attain the limit and their rise and fall in their struggle.

Blank Verse: Another great achievement of Marlowe was to introduce a new type of blank verse in his tragedies. A new spirit of poetry was breathed into the artificial and monotonous verse of the old days. In fact, the whole of Elizabethan Drama was enlivened by a new poetic grandeur.

Seriousness and Concentration: Another notable characteristic of Marlowe's work is seriousness and concentration on the theme and there is complete lack of humor. According to many critics, the clownish scenes and the other absurdities were interpolated by the later authors. There are also no women characters in Marlowe's works; this is also a typical quality of his. The episodes of Helen in Doctor Faustus and other female figures in other plays are only shadows or figure-heads. Most of these features may also be regarded as the drawbacks, however; it was Marlowe's distinct way of writing which is typical of him. Or perhaps, for these reasons, he couldn't reach the towering high plane of fame as did Shakespeare. But we must remember that he was a pioneer and path-finder. He was the Columbus of a new literary World in England. It is due to Marlowe that we have Shakespeare whom we know and read, but had Marlowe not written such these works, there would have been Shakespeare, but not the one we know today. Shakespeare, without him, would have been only another writer.

Renaissance Elements in Doctor Faustus

The word 'Renaissance' itself means 'rebirth'. "The idea of rebirth originated in the belief that Europeans had discovered the superiority of Greek and Roman culture after many centuries of what they considered intellectual and culture decline." Thus the question what was the renaissance about is answered as the widespread cultural revival marking the division between the so called 'dark ages' and the modern world. The Renaissance was a period of fundamental change in human outlook once dominated by religious dogma and Christian theology. The age was marked by a great yearning for unlimited knowledge; by love for worldliness – supreme power, sensual pleasures of life; by love for beauty; respect for classicism; by skepticism, individualism and Machiavellian influence.

Christopher Marlowe was a product of the Renaissance. Therefore it was usual for him that his play Doctor Faustus would contain Renaissance spirit. We see in Doctor Faustus a wonderful expression of renaissance elements and the character Doctor Faustus as a renaissance man.

The most important thing in the Renaissance is craving for 'knowledge infinite'. This characteristic has been injected in Faustus properly. He has achieved knowledge of all branches. Yet he feels unfulfilled. So he wants to practice black art and with this he would be able to know all things: **"I will have them read me strange philosophy."**

After selling his soul, he, at the very first, questions Mephistopheles to know the mystery of the universe, about the position of hell.

> **"First, will I question with thee about hell,**
> **Tell me where is the place that men call hell?"**

Faustus's longing for material prosperity, for money and wealth, which is also a Renaissance element, has been expressed in the following lines where he desires to gain the lordship of Embden a great commercial city-

> **"Of wealth!**
> **Why, the signiority of Embden shall be mine."**

He further wants to enjoy a splendid life full of worldly pleasures. He says,

> **"I will have them fly to India for gold,**
> **Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,**
> **....**
> **And search all the corners of the new found world.**
> **For pleasant fruits and princely delicates."**

Here we see another inherent thing characterized by Renaissance in Faustus i.e. love for adventure.

Faustus's eagerness to get the most beautiful German maid to be his wife and Helen to be his paramour and to find heaven in her lips proves his love of beauty along with love for sensual pleasure which is also a Renaissance element. He says to Mephistophilis,

> **"For I am wanton and lascivious**
> **And cannot live without a wife."**

Dominance of classical literature, art and culture is a prominent feature of the Renaissance. And it is frequently expressed by Faustus in his allusions, examples,

references. One of such examples can be noticed in the following couple of lines where Faustus says,

"Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?"

"The Renaissance was marked by an intense interest in the visible world and in the knowledge derived from concrete sensory experience." "It turned away from the abstract speculations and interest in life after death that characterized the middle Ages." Faustus raises question and gives answer to that question in the following lines-

"That, after this life, there is any pain?
Thus, these are trifles and mere old wives tales."

Thus Renaissance allows Scepticism and secularism.

In the Renaissance, "the unique talents and potential of the individual became significant. The concept of personal fame was much more highly developed than during Middle Ages." Actually Faustus is an individualistic tragic hero. His tragedy is his own creation. He does not think like traditional heroes or men. He crosses his limit while common people do not generally cross that.

Renaissance movement is greatly influenced by Niccolo Machiavelli, his The Prince and his ideal "ends justify the means." Similarly Faustus also wants to reach his goal by any means, even by selling his soul to Devil –"Faustus gives to thee his soul." Furthermore, Faustus earns money by selling a false horse to a Horse-course deceitfully. The Renaissance has made Faustus fascinated by supreme power. Faustus says-

"A sound magician is a mighty God
Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity."

Finally we must say that Faustus is a faithful embodiment of the Renaissance. He bears all the characteristics of the age. Actually Marlowe has pictured Faustus with great care and interest of the age. George Satayana justly says in this regard – "Marlowe is a martyr to everything, power, curious knowledge, enterprise, wealth and beauty."

Faustus as an Individualistic Tragic Hero of Renaissance

Christopher Marlowe, in his Doctor Faustus, his master piece, draws an excellent character before us. This character can be regarded as a strong individual, an embodiment of Renaissance and a tragic hero. Indeed, each and every man possesses two forces going on in him.one is social that abides by the set up rules of his surroundings. Another is individual that thinks things in his mind particularly from his own demand, dream and thought. In Doctor Faustus's case, it is the second one- he has a firm individuality, that's why he is called an individualistic hero

As an embodiment of Renaissance, Doctor Faustus, having attained knowledge, power and fame, wants more and more, unparalleled possession. He has achieved knowledge of all branches. Yet he wants to do whatever he pleases. So he would like to practice necromancy.

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please
....
I will have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,

> **And search all corners of the new-found world**
> **For pleasant fruits and princely delicates;**
> **I'll have them read me strange philosophy,**
> **And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;**

Thus he will compel them to build a wall of brass around Germany and to make the river Rine divert its course to flow round the lovely city of Wittenberg; will be able to supply plenty of silk garments to the public school; will drive Prince of Parma form his country and become the supreme monarch of all the provinces; and will have wonderful and powerful weapons of war.

But before and after attaining the black art, there runs a conflict in him between the good and evil, between the good and bad which is at the beginning symbolized by good angel and evil angle. (Act 1, Scene 1)

> **In order to attain his purpose, Doctor Faustus racks the name of God ....**

Faustus is an individual tragic hero. He is the maker of his own tragedy, his fate, good or bad. He falls, not by the fickleness of fortune or the decree of fate, or because he has been corrupted by Mephistopheles, the agent of Lucifer, the devil, but all things happen to him because of his own will. He commits sin by wanting like God or to exceed God and by rejecting God and accepting Beelzebub, the devil. So he must suffer in fine.

Faustus always experiences a conflict between his consciousness and free will which is also found in great tragic heroes of Shakespeare, namely Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello.

Faustus is a tragic hero, individual in character. But through his death he proves the loftiness of God, Almighty. O.P. Broclbent says- "Faustus's passion for knowledge and power is in itself a virtue, but diverted from the service of God it threatens to become totally negative and self- destroying''.

However, if we go through the depth of Faustas's tragedy, we observe that Faustus stands not for a character, not for a single man, but for man, for every man. His tragedy is not a personal tragedy, but a tragedy that overtakes all those who dare "practice more than heavenly power permits" In this way, Faustus's individualistic tragedy turns to a universal too.

To sum up, we must say that Doctor Faustus is an embodiment of Renaissance, a tragic hero, individual and forceful. At the same time, he represents us too. But the only difference is that we dare hardly avoid the established concepts of society, religion, but Faustus boldly went ahead to his individual demand. However in religious point of view, he committed a great sin and suffered a lot - that is, it is a morality play too.

Renaissance ideals vs Medieval morals

Faustus's inner turmoil gives way to the dominant meaning within the play: Medieval morals versus Renaissance ideals. Marlowe's characterization of Faustus leads one to the predominant idea of duality in society of his era in which Medieval values conflict with those of the Renaissance. His refusal to see what is fact and what is fiction is a result of his pompous persona. In his quest to become omnipotent, Faustus fails to see that there is life after death and that his material possessions are of no consequence. Faustus is a combatant in his own internal war of knowledge or salvation.

In the opening of the play Marlowe uses the chorus to announce the time, place, and most importantly, to introduce Faustus. The chorus refers to the Greek myth of Icarus while characterizing Faustus –

" Till swoll'n with cunning, of self-conceit
His waxen wings did mount above his reach
And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow!"(Prologue. 19-21.)."

His waxen wings did mount above his reach" is an ironic comparison between Icarus and Faustus. It is ironic because Icarus directly disobeys his father, which ties into the idea of moral sin. However, in Faustus' case it is disobedient to become too learned. Also, the line: **"heavens conspired his overthrow"** could be a reference to Lucifer's attempt to overpower God. Thus, the Chorus would ultimately be making reference to Faustus attempting to outwit God. This is the contrast between Medieval and Renaissance values; the medieval world shunned all that was not Christian while the Renaissance was a re-birth of learning in which people openly questioned divinity as with much more. The chorus makes it seem that Faustus is a 'bad' man because he seeks knowledge. In essence, it portrays Faustus as a "Renaissance man who pays the medieval price for being one."

Faustus's constant struggle to explore Renaissance principles is heightened by the Good Angel and Bad Angel. The Good Angel pulls Faustus towards Medieval values. He represents Faustus's Medieval instincts:

"O Faustus, lay that damned book aside
And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul
And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!
Read, read the Scriptures - that is blasphemy!" (1.1.67-69).

The Angel is eluding to Medieval ideals by saying that books are 'damned' and will bring 'God's heavy wrath'. 'That is blasphemy' is yet another reference to books not being of God. The Good Angel is Faustus key to salvation. Again, Faustus's inner conflict gives way to the ultimate theme of redemption and sin. While the Good Angel represents the medieval era, the Bad Angel signifies the Renaissance:

"Go forward Faustus, in that famous art
Wherein all nature's treasure is contained.
...
Lord and commander of these elements!"(1.1.71-74).

The Bad Angel feeds Faustus's thirst for knowledge by telling him that 'all nature's treasure is contained' in his books. Going even further, the Angel tells Faustus to be 'Lord' and 'commander' of these elements ultimately telling Faustus that he could be God if he so chose. Both angels are ultimately signify duality within society. Where half are pulled towards the righteous Medieval morals and the others toward liberated Renaissance ideals.

Faustus embraces his Renaissance persona by acknowledging his life choices. In his never ending quest to obtain knowledge, Faustus conjures Helen of Troy so that he may marvel at her beauty:

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Illium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Her kiss suck forth my soul.
See where it flies!" (5.1.95-99).

Helen is an apt person for Faustus to gawk at. She was considered to be the most beautiful women in the entire world. However, Faustus lives in a time and place of sexual repression. Thus, Helen represents sin and sexual freedom - an end to Medieval morals. The word 'immortal' implies that Helen's kiss allows men to live forever and that Helen herself is 'immortal'. This ironical comparison demonstrates that Faustus is still in denial about death. However, with 'Her kiss suck forth my soul', Faustus suggests that Helen has taken his life. This is ironic on many levels, most noticeably being that many men died to rescue Helen from the Trojans. In addition, Faustus is the only one responsible for his lost soul. The conjuring of Helen of Troy represents Faustus's decision to accept what he has done with his life and follow his Renaissance persona. In calling on Helen, Faustus has yielded himself to immortal sins. First and foremost, Faustus has sinned by using black magic to call on Helen. Lastly, Faustus is openly sexual with Helen of Troy. His kissing of Helen is ultimately a symbol of accepting that which has already been done and preparing to face eternal damnation.

Faustus's epic battle between Medieval morals and Renaissance ideals results in his eternal damnation. Faustus has many chances to repent, yet not once does he decided to put an end to seeking knowledge and practicing magic. His decision is ultimately a signal for the end of Medieval beliefs in 'religion being the key' and the emergence of free thinking. Faustus has been said to be "a Renaissance man who paid the Medieval price for being one". He was an intellectual in a society of ignorance imposed upon by the clergy of the Catholic Church.

Though Faustus is the tragic hero of the play one must really consider if in fact Faustus's demise is tragic. Faustus makes his own decisions and knows where they will take him to in the end. He refuses to see that heaven and hell do exist and despite the many warnings given to him about the heinousness of hell, he still follows the path of damnation Faustus's harrowing demise results in eternal damnation is tragic. He is a man with the charisma and courage to follow his passions in life. Faustus is told time after time that he can still repent and save himself from the wrath of God. Several times he does in fact repent, yet because of his inner conflict he 'takes it back'. Not till Faustus utters his last words is one completely sure that Faustus's story is tragic, at best. Ultimately, he dies unhappy and still a combatant in his own internal war.

At the end we can say that in spite of being a man of medieval period, Faustus was a Renaissance man. And by his activities we find the elements of Renaissance where medieval values are buried because of the emergence of Renaissance ideals.

Doctor Faustus as an Over-Reacher

Doctor Faustus is what Harry Levin calls, 'an over-reacher.' The play is a tragedy of presumption in which a man of humble origin but great learning over reaches and ruins himself. It presents the pathetic figure of a great mind going to ruin. Doctor Faustus is a typical Renaissance hero. He reveals an important aspect of the Renaissance temper. He like other Marlovian heroes is distinguished by his **fiery passion**, capacity for **infinite struggle** and the Renaissance **lust for power**, **beauty**, **wealth** and **knowledge**.

Marlovian heroes are the embodiments or manifestations of single qualities and single forces. They are projected from his subjectivity and made convincing by sheer

imaginative insight into the dark mysteries of nature. They are all massively drawn. They are all Titanic figures who challenge the forces which ultimately prove too great for them. They stand all by themselves and dwarf and over-shadow all other characters. They are **lonely figures** in a world of Lilliputians. Faustus seeks **infinite knowledge** and the **satisfaction of physical desires**. Barabas has an **unlimited passion for revenge**. They seem to illustrate Machiavelli's Prince whose only desirable virtue is ambition and who denies all morality except that which operates for his own good. But man, by nature, has limited power. His desire to transcend himself is bound to be frustrated. This is the typical tragic predicament (situation). As informed by the chorus, Faustus is swollen with cunning of a self-conceit; his waxen wings did mount above his reach.

Faustus, in the opening soliloquy shows his **dissatisfaction with various branches of knowledge**. He has studied Aristotle's logic but that has only sharpened his thirst for knowledge, he rejects the study of medicine as it has failed to put life into the dead. He disapproves of the study of law which provides only petty gains. The study of religion is considered futile as it only tells of the essential sinful nature of man.

> **Yet art thou still but Faustus and a man.**

He **wishes to acquire unlimited knowledge**. This he feels is possible only through the study of magic.

> **Divinity, adieu!**
> **These metaphysics of magicians,**
> **And necromantic books are heavenly;**
> **Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters;**
> **Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires**

He is **prepared to sign the contract in his own blood** to **give away** his **soul** to **Satan** in order to **seek infinite knowledge**. He is obviously tired of orthodox learning. As soon as Mephistophilis appears, he starts questioning him about the nature of hell and heaven, of earth and the stars, of God and devil. Immediately after signing contract, he moves in a dragon-drawn chariot through various planets in the universe. Obviously this doctor of divinity has forgotten the Christian dictum that the fruit of knowledge is forbidden. He suffers because he is tempted to explore the mysteries that are forbidden by heavenly powers.

True to a typical Marlovian hero, Faustus treats God and Devil not merely as rival centres of power but himself wishes to be a similar centre of power. It is with this end in view that he pursues the study of "black art". This pursuit of magic will put at his command all things that move between the quiet poles. He believes that '**A sound magician is a demi-god'**. Like Tamburlaine, he wishes to be a great emperor of the world:

> **I'II join the hills that bind the Afric shore**
> **And make that country continent to Spain**
> **And both contributory to my crown:**
> **The Emperor shall not live but by my leave.**
> **Nor any potentate in Germany.**

Like the Prince of Machiavelli, Faustus doesn't bother about the traditional morality. He appears to be at least as great as Devil, if not as God. He seeks a vision of greatness

which is denied by the laws that govern human beings. A king commands power only in his kingdom but Faustus through magic wishes control over the elements.

The trade with the countries of Asia and Africa was bringing a lot of wealth into the country. This created an insatiable desire for wealth. Faustus shares Barabas' **thirst for wealth**. That is perhaps why Faustus is keen to call forth spirits and says: -

> **I'll have them fly to India for gold,**
> **Ransack the ocean for the orient pearl.**

Beauty was a passion with the Elizabethans. True to this spirit, Faustus wishes to live in all voluptuousness and yarns to have "a world of profit and delight". He summons blind Homer to sing of Alexander's love and Oenon's death. He listens to the music of Amphion who raised the walls of Thebes with music. He calls the spirit of Helen, the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium. He yearns for a kiss of Helen that will make him "immortal". He is thus truly a microcosm of Renaissance humanism. This love for sensuous pleasure is reflected when one of the first desires mentioned by Faustus is to have a wife. This craze for carnal delights is both the cause and effect of his suffering. It is this passion that leads him astray and he drowns his inner conflict in these very physical pleasures.

Faustus as a tragic hero introduces the element of inner conflict for the first time in English drama.

"Faustus remains an almost unique record of spiritual tragedy." The **conflict** in this play is not between man and man, nor in the interaction of a group of characters but between the divine will and the human will, between curiosity and conscience. Faustus, ambitious like Milton's Satan, undergoes a similar deterioration and degeneration and therein lies his tragedy. He seeks to have "a world of profit and delight, of power, of honour, and of omnipotence". He does start with an ambition of world conquest and securing all knowledge. He does satisfy his lust for knowledge and power but forgets all about his claims. He neither builds any brass wall around Germany nor any bridge joining Spain with Africa. Instead of becoming a world-emperor, he is reduced to the level of an entertainer and a juggler. His mischief with the Pope reduces him to the level of a buffoon. His trick with the horse-dealer is like that of a clown. His fetching the grapes in winter is cheap show that jugglers perform even now. He had rejected medicine because it could not turn the dead into living. He had decided to pursue the black art because it would help him control the elements. But in actual practice, he fails to avoid his own death and cannot stop the movement of time. The comic scenes rightly parody his efforts. But all this deterioration and degeneration is not sudden. The change in him is gradual like in Satan in Paradise Lost. From the ridicule of Pope, to the ridicule of a knight and then to the ridicule of an ordinary horse-dealer indicates this steady down-fall. In the beginning he calls Mephistopheles and can command him. Later he depends on Mephistophilis to do everything. But ultimately the evil spirits dominate him and he seeks to drown his grief into sensuous pleasures. To conclude we can rightly say that Faustus presents the pathetic figure of a great mind going to ruin.

Blank verse in Doctor Faustus

Blank verse is a literary device defined as un-rhyming verse written in iambic pentameter. In poetry and prose, it has a consistent meter with 10 syllables in each line

(pentameter); where, unstressed syllables are followed by stressed ones and five of which are stressed but do not rhyme. It is also known as un-rhymed iambic pentameter.

Marlowe has always been regarded more of a poet rather than a dramatist. Both his contemporaries and the moderns have waxed eloquent in praise of his poetic excellence. Helen Rex Keller calls Doctor Faustus a tragic poem rather than a play. Pinkerton observes, "It is neither the philosophical nor the teaching element that attracts us now. The play touches us, I think, by the quality of its poetry". Swinburne regards this play as the most remarkable of all great poems in dramatic form. He believes that a few master-pieces of any age in any language can stand beside the tragic poem for the qualities of terror and splendor, for intensity of purpose and sublimity of note. J. A. Symonds remarks that Marlowe traced the outline of the legend of Faustus with a breadth and dignity, beyond the scope of the prose legend. He filled it with the power of a great poet and with the intensity of life belonging to himself. Leigh Hunt declared, "If there was a born poet, Marlowe was one." Robertson could never think of him except as a poet, Marlowe was one". Robertson could never think of him except as a poet. Saintsbury regards Marlowe as one of the greatest poets of the world whose work was caused by accident and caprice into an imperfect mould of drama. Marlowe masters us by poetry. He is lifted above his fellows-reaching the pedestal on which Shakespeare stands alone.

All these estimates make us praising Doctor Faustus as a great dramatic poem rather as a great play overlooking the remarkable acting quality of the chief scenes. This acting quality is proved by the successful performances both in Marlowe's time and in ours when properly staged. However, it is true that Doctor Faustus has far more passages of superb dramatic poetry than any other play of Marlowe. The subject here, more than even Tamburlaine, lends itself to passionate outbursts and lyrical raptures. Marlowe has few equals in the expression of such lyrical raptures. Faustus' apostrophe to Helena is the most memorable of such passages. Many a times, in many other speeches, Marlowe's imagination glows with a similar brightness. Feeling is here expressed in the same rich phrases, and in the same sonorous music. Most of these passages in Doctor Faustus represent the ecstatic quality of his poetry. Marlowe is the rapturous lyrist of infinite passions. This ecstatic quality finds its best expression in the following lines:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?
And burnt the topless towers of Ilum!
Sweet Helen! Make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul' See, where it flies!

Similarly, Faustus depicts his delight secured through magic in the following lines of poetic excellence:

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?
And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephistophilis?

Again, when Faustus' passion to conquer the secret forces of nature is described, his words have same glow of poetic ecstasy: Simple, Pictorial, Vitalising.

Marlowe's poetry, apart from being ecstatic, is simple, pictorial and Vitalising. Classical legends are used as images in the description of Helen's beauty:

Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he, appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms,

Marlowe is neither rhetorical nor obscure. He speaks with a bright and lucid simplicity. Many of his happiest lines are woven from the words of everyday speech, often a sequence of monosyllables:

Her lips suck forth my soul,' see, where it flies'

Even in its less exalted verse passages, as in Chorus narratives and in some of the speeches, this play is almost entirely free from the rhetorical declamation. The vitalizing energy of Marlowe's poetry lends a beauty and lifting power to this play. We admire even the horrible imagination and vibrant music.

This play very well demonstrates the extent of Marlowe's mastery over blank verse was dull and monotonous. Marlowe uses the end-stopped line. He changes the fall of stress and the internal pause to introduce variety. There is, for example, consistently regular rhythm in the Chorus passages. It creates an effect of stately rigidity. But the opening soliloquy of Faustus has flexibility introduced through variation in rhythm and pause. The last soliloquy of Faustus shows Marlowe's highest attainment as a meterist. Here, in response to the stress of the passions, the blank verse is worked into new beautiful rhythms. The blank verse before Marlowe was like a dried preparation. It seemed to wait for infusion of new blood. Earlier blank verse was rendered lifeless by stiff rules, rigid regularity and monotony. Marlowe brought an end to this old wooden versification. He liberated blank verse from the shackles of formalism, rigidity and regularity. His verse is throbbing with life and vitality. It gives full play to his poetic power and passion. It permits the ebb and tide of diction. It is pervaded with the rhythm of thought and feeling. His exceptional poetic genius helped him to achieve absolute freedom, flexibility and range for his blank verse. The leaden ore of the meter of Gorbodue was transformed by him into the liquid gold of his mighty lines.

We may conclude with Bradley that Marlowe had many of the makings of a great poet ¾ a capacity for Titanic passions which might with time have become Olympian. His imaginative vision which was already intense must have deepened and widened with time. He had the gift of style and making words sing which is unique and unparalleled.

Blank verse is a literary device defined as un-rhyming verse written in iambic pentameter. In poetry and prose, it has a consistent meter with 10 syllables in each line (pentameter); where, unstressed syllables are followed by stressed ones and five of which are stressed but do not rhyme. It is also known as un-rhymed iambic pentameter.

Plot in Doctor Faustus

Marlowe has been criticized by many critics for his defective and faulty plot-construction. Dr. Faustus has been called a failure in construction though it has a quite natural and impressive introduction and exposition. lfor Evans believes that the play is not wholly successful. He agrees that its opening speeches, in which Faustus barters his soul, are magnificent. The closing presentation of the final hour of retribution reaches a depth of pathos which Marlowe never equaled. The weakness, according to him, lies in the middle scenes, some of which are crude, and even farcical. Indeed they are considered so inadequate that some critics have even doubted Marlowe's authorship of these scenes.

Helen Rex Keller calls it rather a tragic poem than a play. It consists of fourteen scenes without any grouping into acts. Felix Schelling thinks that the play is little more than a succession of scenes, void of continuity or cohesion. The only factors of unity are the central figure and his unrelenting progress towards catastrophe. Nicholas Brooke believes that the play is wandering, ill-constructed and ill-written affair despite its flashes of greatness. R. S. Knox and Harry Levin, like lfor Evans take strong exception to the middle scenes of the play.

There is much art in the simple, quiet opening. Faustus is in meditation among his books. This soliloquy reveals the working of Faustus' mind. His keen intellect rejects all subjects. The mastery over these subjects is inadequate to satisfy his lust for power and position. He dreams of superhuman force through magic. It reflects the spirit of Renaissance with its yearning for new realms of art and learning and passion for unlimited power. The silent entry of the Angels and their whispered device have a great dramatic impact. It is not just a continuation of the tradition of Miracle and Morality plays. It shows a conflict in Faustus' mind between moral and religious ideas of Reformation and the worldly ambitions of Renaissance. Faustus' enraptured cry, as he thinks of the glorious future offered to him, makes an impressive picture if seen in a setting approaching bare Elizabethan stage:

O what a world of profit and delight.
Of power of honour of omnipotence,
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command.

The signing of the contract with the devil vigorously portrays Faustus' excitement, his terror and his almost hysterical haste to put his new power to the test.

The end of the play culminates in great emotional moments like the reappearance of the Old Man and Faustus' cry of ecstasy as he gazes at the symbol of conscience in Faustus' soul. Old man represents Christian faith with its ideas of prayer and penitence salvation and redemption. He makes Faustus aware of his polluted soul and the need for sincere repentance. But Faustus is plunged into deep despair. The love for physical pleasures so degrades him that he asks Mephistophilis to torture the Old Man. The physical tortures are treated by the Old Man as a test of his faith in God which ultimately triumphs. It gains its dramatic value by contrast with Faustus who is terribly afraid of physical tortures. The craving for Helen's beauty to drown his despair has a deep psychological basis. Most effective is, however, the ecstatic praise of Helen's beauty

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships.
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen! make me immortal with a kiss.

The last soliloquy reveals Faustus' tragic discovery of the reality of hell and its tortures and the prospect of eternal damnation because Faustus vomits out his inner mental corruption. It is the deep agony of a terror-stricken soul;

If thou will not have mercy on my soul.
Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain,
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years.
A hundred thousand. and at last be sav 'd.

Most of the critics have condemned the middle scenes, the comic scenes, in Dr. Faustus. These scenes have been called crude, grotesque and even farcical. J. A. Symonds believes that they might be easily transposed without any material injury to the plan. Dr. Lopez, a contemporary of Marlowe, has referred to the interpolation of comic scenes. The diary of Marlowe's actor-manager suggests that he had engaged the services of William Birde and Samuel Rowley for changing the text of Dr. Faustus. Harold Osborne and Arnold Wynne dismiss these scenes as crude buffoonery in the tradition of native comedy to tickle the fancy of the groundlings.

The presence of comic scenes can be justified on many grounds. The introduction of cheap buffoonery in a tragedy was in keeping with the taste of contemporary audiences. T.S. Eliot has suggested that it is wrong to suppose that Marlowe had no sense of humour. He gives the example of Marlowe's Dido. Queen of Carthage, and Tamburlaine to show his sense of humour. J.C. Maxwell has suggested that comic scenes in this play are quite consistent with its main theme. The same genius that shows itself in the tragic scenes is manifested, though less strikingly, in the selection exercised on miscellaneous buffoonery. Marlowe brings some order out of chaos by presenting the high-life scenes side by side with low-life scenes.

Most of the comic scenes parody the main plot. They thus introduce the ironic element in the play and deepen its significance. In the first scene, Faustus announces his intellectual supremacy and his decision to acquire god-like power through magic. In the second scene, Wagner apes his master's display of learning by arguing with the two scholars. In the third scene Faustus agrees to sell his soul for power and sensuous pleasures. Immediately after this, the Clown considers selling of his soul for a shoulder of mutton and a taste of wenching. In the next scenes he launches his career as a magician by snatching away the Pope's food and drink. Similarly Raphel and Robin parody Faustus' magic and try to steal a goblet from a Vintner. In the latter half of the play, the mighty Faustus parodies his own ambitious thoughts just as Wagner and the Clown had parodied them earlier. As Faustus becomes invisible, the tragic-comic contrast begins to merge. Scene by scene, the images approach one another until at last we discover the figure of the fool beneath the exalted appearance of the fearless rebel. When Faustus steals the Pope's cup and Robin steals the Vintner's goblet, the tragic and the comic images nearly merge. The difference between the hero and the clown is one of degree, not of kind.

The balance of tragic and comic elements in Faustus is somewhat comparable to that in Paradise Lost. C. S. Lewis has suggested that Satan might have been a comic figure if Milton had chosen to emphasize, more than he does, the absurdity of diabolical ambition. Like Faustus, Satan changes his shape. Satan, however, is the unwitting fool of God, the brilliant schemer whose victory turns to ashes. Faustus' destiny is more obscure and pathetic. He is Lucifer's fool, not God's.

Dr. Faustus doesn't have a plot construction in the ordinary sense. But it has a better construction than Tamburlaine or The Jew of Malta. R. G. Lunt points out that the play has five well-marked natural movements or divisions corresponding to the five acts of a play. Similarly Ellis Fermor divides the play into six episodes followed by a catastrophe. In the first episode, Faustus surveys his position and chooses to study magic that begins the action and sets it moving towards the crisis. In the second episode, Mephistophilis is summoned. Next episode presents the crisis - the contract with the devil and the resulting wavering of mind. Faustus regrets in the fourth episode but the evil powers

triumph. It is followed by the period of disintegration and loss of ideals. The last episode, after a brief conflict between good and evil forces, presents a confirma-tion of the terrible bond and the appearance of Helen.

Harry Levin discovers in the play the main plot, the sub-plot and the over-plot. The main plot deals with the ambitions and ideals of Dr. Faustus, his struggle to achieve his ambition and his ultimate tragedy. The comic sub-plot presents an anti-climax to the main plot. It shows Faustus' ideals and aspirations in a comic light. It emphasizes the fact that the comic and the serious, the ridiculous and the sublime, are closely inter-linked. They are two sides of the same coin. The over-plot or the philosophical plot represents the struggle between the forces of good and evil in the universe and in the human soul. This struggle makes the play so gripping.

So to sum up we can say that the general disapproval of the middle or comic scenes of Dr. Faustus is largely misconceived because of the failure to discover a traditional plan of construction in the play. The play has also another and different kind of unity through the dominating character of Faustus .and the presentation of his inner conflict. This conflict lends dignity because the conflict is not between men for domination of one character over another or in the interaction of a group of characters. This conflict is between man and the spiritual powers as in Greek tragedy and this imparts organic unity to the play.

Themes in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Absolute Power, Sin and Redemption, and the Divided Nature of Man

Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" stands as one of the most influential and frequently-referenced pieces of literature in history. The play is the story of Doctor Faustus, a man who considers study in the fields of logic, medicine, law, and divinity and instead chooses to forsake them all to practice black magic. He enters into a deal with Mephastophilis, a servant of the devil, in which Faustus gains the services of the demon but has to give up his soul after 24 years. The play deals with several important themes. The corrupting influence of power, sin and redemption, and the divided nature of man are interwoven throughout the piece.

Absolute power corrupts Faustus thoroughly. In the beginning we are introduced to a man at the top of his game. He's mastered several important disciplines and is seeking a further, more rewarding, challenge so he turns to black magic. Faustus dreams of the many amazing things he'll accomplish with his new powers. He muses on sending spirits to India to fetch him gold, ponders having them "Ransack the ocean for orient pearl," and contemplates how he will use his spirits to gain knowledge of "the secrets of all foreign kings." His ambitions even extend to the throne of Germany.

When finally granted the power he so desires, Faustus proceeds to do very little with it. He starts out auspiciously enough with an adventure in a chariot pulled by dragons so that he may unlock the mysteries of astronomy. Faustus seeks to test the accuracy of maps of the coasts and kingdoms of the world as well and eventually ends up in Rome. Soon after, however, he basically lets his amazing power go to waste. He spends his time impressing various noblemen, playing petty tricks on people, and conjuring up specters of Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy.

The underlying statement Marlowe is making is one of the basic tenets of modern psychology. People simply don't appreciate things they didn't have to work to gain. In the beginning, Faustus is a great man, full of ambition and at the top of his field. While he 'earns' his new-found power in a sense by forfeiting his soul, he has done no actual work to acquire it. Throughout the course of the play we see the formerly-ambitious Faustus reduced to a petty conjurer and celebrity because of the corrupting influence of his power. Instead of choosing to act on his lofty ambitions or, heaven forbid, use his power for unselfish reasons; he simply wastes his days amusing himself with practical jokes and beautiful women.

Marlowe also comments on **the nature of sin and redemption**. Faustus essentially commits the ultimate sin by signing a pact with the devil. He chooses of his own free will to give up his eternal soul in exchange for an earthly reward. According to Christian mythology, one can be forgiven of any sin, one has only to repent and ask God's forgiveness. Despite the severity of his sin, Faustus is given several opportunities to repent his sin and be saved, and is encouraged to do so both by the good angel who appears several times and by the old man in scene 12. Each time he chooses to remain loyal to Hell. He seems to consider repenting at the very end, but Mephistopheles threatens to tear his body apart, so he chooses instead to send Mephistopheles to torture the old man whose words he finds himself unable to heed. Even though an easy answer to the problem of losing his soul exists, and he is several times reminded of it, in the end his own weakness prevents him from making the choice to repent and damns him for all eternity.

The **divided nature of man** is literally personified in the play by the good and evil angels that appear to Faustus periodically. These characters represent opposing sides of Faustus' own psyche, as well as representing emissaries of heaven and hell. Faustus is continually undecided whether he should continue his bargain or repent and seek salvation. He is clearly afraid for his eternal soul but is unable to relinquish the amazing power his bargain has afforded him. Marlowe may have intended the two angels as literal beings, but it's obvious he also intended them as an allegorical representation of Faustus' own internal struggle.

Themes are an integral part of the play, but Marlowe's work has truly stood the test of time. What is it about Doctor Faustus' story that has made it resonant to countless generations of readers since it was written?

The good doctor is a character with whom readers can sympathize. This is not to necessarily say that he is a 'sympathetic' character, but simply that he's a man who faces temptation and a tough choice. Human beings face tough choices every day, and like Faustus we are forced to weigh the consequences of yielding to those temptations.

Every human being faces temptation almost every day of their lives. These temptations range from the miniscule, such as being tempted to eat a slice of bread in spite of your pledge to adhere strictly to the Atkins diet, to the extreme, such as your best friend's drunken girlfriend coming on to you. The story of Faustus rings true with readers even today because of this. It speaks to every reader because there are no people who have lived without temptation. We all have our "good angel" and "bad angel," the voices inside our heads that spell out consequences of choices we're faced with. In most cases, people who give into temptation are aware of the consequences of that choice. The fact that Faustus' temptation is a far greater one than any of us is likely to face and has far

greater consequences than any of us will ever be up against just makes it even more resonant. Everyone has given in to a strong temptation at some point in their lives and it makes us feel good to see someone doing the same despite the enormous consequences that follow for Faustus.

Despite the fact that Faustus has committed the ultimate sin by choosing of his own free will to give up his immortal soul for an earthly reward, the possibility of salvation exists for him until the very end. We as people want to believe that the possibility of salvation and forgiveness exists for us no matter how heinous the deeds we have committed are. Marlowe's play speaks to this desire within us, telling us that, like Faustus, the possibility of repentance and forgiveness exists for us no matter how badly we screw up. It's a very comforting thought, especially to those living with guilt over some past transgression.

Another reason that the story in "Doctor Faustus" is as relevant today as it was when Marlowe wrote it is Faustus himself. Some may see him as a tragic hero, and it's very possible to consider him in this light, but it's also not much of a stretch to call him a villain. Men like Faustus exist even today, people who are willing to do whatever it takes to get what they want regardless of the consequences to themselves or to others. Ken Lay in the recent Enron scandal comes to mind as an example of this. Mr. Lay was perfectly willing to practically destroy the lives of thousands of people by taking their hard-earned money and squandering it on yachts and other expensive trifles. He, in effect, sold his soul. Faustus' selfish deeds remind us that people like him exist in real life. When Faustus is corrupted by his power and basically squanders it we are both angry at his inability to find a way to do good with his powers and pleased that he is getting what he deserves. Society likes it when people who commit evil deeds have it blow up in their face. We want to see justice served, whether it be Faustus' eternity in hell or Mr. Lay's recently-handed-down prison sentence, it feels good to know that evil people are punished.

"Doctor Faustus" has truly stood the test of time as a great piece of classical literature. Countless indications of its influence exist even today, ranging from the film "The Devil's Advocate" to the good and evil angels that appear on the shoulders in Warner Brothers cartoons. Marlowe's use of complex themes and subtle commentary on the nature of man coupled with the underlying messages that speak to the human psyche have established "Doctor Faustus" as a pinnacle of the writer's craft and a treatise on the human condition.

Conflict in Doctor Faustus

Conflict is the essence or the soul of the tragedy and it is born of some strong motivating cause. This conflict may be on two planes: physical plane and spiritual plane. Hence there may be external conflict, and internal or spiritual conflict.

The external conflict generally occurs between the forces of two rival groups. The hero belongs to one of these rival groups and the conflict often takes the form of a battle, a conspiracy or the like. Marlowe’s Tamburlaine, Edward II and the Jew of Malta, all illustrate this external conflict as it takes place between the hero and his adversaries. But the hero’s heart and soul is the great battlefield for the internal or spiritual conflict. Two opposite thoughts, desires, emotions, loyalties or affiliations may contend against each other in human soul giving rise to most acute spiritual conflict. And of all tragic conflicts, the most tragic one is the losing battle of the good in man against the evil that

ultimately comes out triumphant. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, the most outstanding tragedy before Shakespeare, illustrates this supreme spiritual conflict in the most forceful manner.

"Doctor Faustus": Internal or Tragic Conflict

Marlowe's contribution to English or Elizabethan drama was great and manifold. And one of his greatest is the introduction of this internal or spiritual conflict in the mind of his proud and ambitious hero in Doctor Faustus.

In Doctor Faustus we find the conflict or the psychological struggle raging in the heart and soul of the hero. In fact there is hardly any external action in this play**—"the delineation of a psychological struggle or spiritual conflict in the mind of the hero is the chief thing."**

Generally this inner conflict takes place when a man is faced with two alternatives, one of which he must have to choose but finds himself pulled in opposite directions. Now Faustus is inspired by the spirit of Renaissance, by dreams of gaining limitless knowledge and super-human powers. These he can attain only by taking to unholy necromancy, by discarding godly order or by denouncing doctrines of Christianity. Faustus may reject all these intellectually but he is definitely attached to them emotionally. The conflict may be said to be the conflict between will and conscience externalized by the Bad Angel and Good Angel respectively. So the heart of Faustus is the field where the forces of good and evil are trying to overwhelm each other. We can follow this conflict and career of Faustus in the play in three stages.

The First Stage

In the first part of the drama we have the scenes that depict how intellectual pride and inordinate ambition lead Faustus into a vicious (malicious) bargain with the Devil. In the very first scene we find that Faustus is disappointed with all branches of knowledge like Physic, Philosophy, Law and Divinity as they are absolutely inadequate to serve his purpose. Finally he decides in favour of the black art of magic as:

"These metaphysics of magicians,
And necromantic books are heavenly."
And he convinces himself that:
"A sound magician is a mighty god"

The dramatic tension of Faustus lies in the fact that he is determined to satisfy the demands of his nature as God has made him—to be himself a deity—that is forbidden: it can be achieved by a conscious rejection of God who created him in his own image, but denied him (as much as Lucifer) fulfillment of that image. But Faustus's emotional attachment to the medieval doctrines of Christianity is too deep to be rooted out. Hence just after his final decision in favour of necromancy he feels the prick of conscience and in this very scene the Good Angel and the Evil Angel make their first appearance on the stage. These two Angels, in fact, represent the two aspects of human mind. Hence here the **Angels are externalizing the inner conflict between vice and virtue, between will and conscience raging in the mind of Doctor Faustus**. We find that the entire action of the play is fluctuating between the weak and wavering loyalties of Faustus to these two opposing forces. The Good Angel urges Faustus to shun 'that damned book' and to read the scriptures. But the Evil angel scores a victory by luring away Faustus with the assurance that by mastering the black art of magic Faustus will be: "Lord and

commander of the elements." After meeting and talking to his two friends who also encourage and inspire him to go for necromancy Faustus is determined that: "**This night I'll conjure, though I die therefore."** Then at the end of third scene of Act I we find Faustus telling Mephistopheles that he has already abjured the Trinity of his own will and has absolutely made up his mind to sell his soul to the Devil to gain limitless powers with the help of Mephistopheles as his abject slave and 'to live in all voluptuousness' for twenty-four years. His imagination takes wings and he tells us:

"Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.
By him I'll be great emperor of the world."
And then he starts indulging in day-dreams.

Undoubtedly, Faustus abjured God and the Trinity and decided to surrender his soul to the Devil of his own will, but in the beginning of Scene I of Act II, we find Faustus experiencing the **prick of Conscience and a tussle between will and conscience** starts raging in his soul. It begins to dawn on him that he is going to be eternally damned and can in no way be saved and he gives vent to his sense of despair thus:

"Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again,
To God? He loves thee not:
The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite,
Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub:"

The Good Angel and the Evil Angel, the symbols of his passion and conscience make their appearance again. But the lure of wealth and honour scores over the voice of conscience that urges him to pray and repent. He is now determined to write the bond with his own blood for surrendering his soul to the devil. But when Faustus starts writing the bond his blood coagulates. Then again when he has already 'bequeath'd his soul to Lucifer' he has optical illusion: the words 'Homo, fuge' have been inscribed on his arm. All these are outward expressions of the voice of virtue in him.

The Second Stage

In this stage is depicted Faustus's pathetic struggle to escape his impending doom and damnation and his deep sense of helplessness. This is revealed when he confesses to Mephistopheles that:

"When I behold the heavens, then I repent,'
And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis,
Because thou hast depriv'd me of those joys."

The two Angels appear again—one urging him to pray and repent so that he may still have God's mercy and the other tells him that as he is a spirit, God can never pity him. Faustus very sadly realizes **"My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent:"** And he would have killed himself out of despair had the sweet pleasures provided by Mephistopheles not dispelled his gloom of despair. Again at the end of this very scene the conflict in his soul becomes very acute when Mephistopheles refuses to answer some of his questions and the Good and Evil Angels reappear to externalize his inner conflict.

This time the Good Angel's appeal has some effect on his mind. But the Evil Angel tells him that the devils will tear him to pieces if he listened to the voice of conscience. Realizing the critical situation Lucifer himself, Beelzebub and Mephistopheles appear before him and finally warn him not to think of God so that there may not be any breach

of his bond. And Faustus has to submit to the demand of the Devil once more. And to pull up his drooping mind the Devil puts up the flimsy show of Seven Deadly Sins.

The spiritual conflict takes the most acute turn in the first scene of Act V after Faustus has raised the spirit of Helen and when the Old Man, the symbol of the good and divine in him, appears before him. His was the last attempt to guide his steps 'unto the way of life'. The acute mental tension is revealed forcefully in the following lines:

"Where art thou Faustus, wretch what hast thou done:
Damn'd art thou, Faustus, damned, despair and die."
Out of desperation, Faustus is just going to commit suicide; but it is the same Old Man who prevents him from taking this desperate step with a fervent appeal 'to call for mercy, and avoid despair.' But alas! Faustus ultimately seals his own fate by surrendering himself into the arms of sweet Helen to make him 'immortal with a kiss' just to forget the intense agony of his troubled and despairing soul.

The Final Scene

In the closing scene we find the climax culminating into a terrible catastrophe. Faustus has realised that he is doomed to eternal damnation without the least hope of redemption. The most poignant soliloquy of Doctor Faustus starting just before an hour of his final doom reveals forcefully the deep agony of a horror-struck soul. His last-minute frantic appeal to the ever-moving spheres of heaven to stand still or to the sun to rise again to 'make perpetual day' "That Faustus may repent and save his soul!"—is absolutely of no avail. And when the final hour strikes the Devil's disciples snatch away the agonised and trouble-torn soul of Faustus to hell to suffer eternal damnation.

We may now conclude with the very illuminating remark of Ellis-Fermor. "In Marlowe's great tragic fragment, the conflict is not between man and man for the domination of one character over another, or in the inter-action of a group of characters. But as in Aeschylus's Eumenides, the protagonists are man and the spiritual powers that surround him, the scene is set in on spot upon physical earth but in the limitless region of the mind and the battle is fought, not for kingdoms or crowns, but upon the question of man's ultimate fate. Before him lies the possibility to escape to spiritual freedom or a doom of slavery to demoniac powers. Thus, and in such terms is staged the greatest conflict that drama has ever undertaken to present."

"Doctor Faustus": A Link between Morality and Drama

Introduction: - Marlowe has rightly been called the 'Morning Star' of the great Elizabethan drama. Among the first pioneers of Elizabethan drama, he was definitely the greatest. Undoubtedly, it was Marlowe who raised the matter and the manner of the English drama to a high level and set it firmly on the straight road to greatness by drawing it from the old rut of Morality and rambling Interlude.

So Marlowe's contribution to the evolving of Romantic drama was really great. But the fact is that the Romantic drama was a curious blend of indigenous and classical traditions. Hence some of the characteristics of medieval Miracle and Morality plays are quite evident in the plays of Marlowe. And in this respect Doctor Faustus may be treated

as a connecting link between the Miracle and Morality plays and the illustrious drama of Elizabethan period.

Miracle and Mystery Plays and "Doctor Faustus": - The English dramas of the Middle Ages which presented the miracle of the saints and, very often, scenes from the Bible were generally and correctly, called Miracle plays. Scholars, from time to time, have attempted to distinguish between the Miracle play and the Mystery—the former as the saints-play and the latter as the Bible play. But both terms are still used for both types with very little discrimination. The production of these plays was at its height in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Saints-plays were earlier than Biblical plays. Those who wrote and produced them called them Miracles, shows or pageants. There is no doubt that the chief purpose of these plays was religious and ethical teaching, but between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, these plays, which developed from liturgical dramas became secularised. In such plays, generally a large number of scenes depicting the life of a saint was stringed together and the structure was always loose. But in the process of secularisation, comic scenes with coarse buffoonery found their place. The story of the plays was confined to the two books of the Bible. The Devil had also its part to play, though the plot, if there was any, centered round the main character allowing very little scope to minor figures.

In Marlowe's Doctor Faustus we can easily trace some of the characteristics of the Miracle plays. In Scene IV of Act I we find two devils, Baliol and Belcher, entering just to frighten the clown. Devils also appear in Act II, Sc. I and II and also in Act IV, Sc. Ill and Act V, Sc. II. The tradition of Chorus is also maintained. We find the Chorus introducing the story just before the beginning of the first scene and subsequently filling in the gaps in the narrative and announcing the end of the play with a very solemn moral. The looseness of the structure is quite evident, and as in the Miracle plays the story centres around a single towering figure, Doctor Faustus. From the very name of this type of plays it is obvious that the main figures must have performed some outstanding miracles. And here in this drama we find Faustus performing amazing feats of Miracle.

Morality Plays and "Doctor Faustus": -The Morality play is really a fusion of the medieval allegory and the religious drama, of the Miracle plays. It developed at the end of the fourteenth century and gained much popularity in the fifteenth century. In these plays the characters were personified abstractions of vice or virtues such as Good Deeds, Faith, Mercy, Anger. The outstanding Morality play, Everyman, has characters like Wealth, Good Deeds, Death and others. The general theme of the Moralities was theological and the main one was the struggle between good and evil powers for capturing man's soul and the journey of life with its choice of eternal destinations. Very often the Seven Deadly Sins were found engaged in physical and verbal battle with cardinal virtues. Even though the Morality plays were essentially religious or ethical and didactic, they were also not dull like the Miracle plays. The antics of vices and devils etc., offered a considerable opportunity for low comedy or buffoonery and thus farcical elements developed in a great way.

The Morality play, more or less, disappeared after mid-fifteenth century but the trace of its influences appears in Elizabethan drama. In this respect we may call Marlowe's Doctor Faustus a belated Morality in spite of its tragic ending. And even Shakespeare's Macbeth is not free from its influence as this play also presents a conflict between the good and the evil.

"Doctor Faustus": - Let us take up Doctor Faustus exclusively. If the general theme of Morality plays was theological dealing with the struggle of the forces of good and evil for the soul of man, and the aim was to teach doctrines and ethics of Christianity, then Doctor Faustus may be called a religious or Morality play to a very great extent. The play definitely worked out in a tone of medieval theology. We find Marlowe's hero, Faustus, abjuring the scriptures, the Trinity and Christ. He surrenders his soul to the Devil out of his inordinate ambition to gain super-human power through knowledge by mastering the unholy art of magic. And thus he says to himself to make up his mind regarding the subject he wishes to study in future:

> **"Divinity adieu!**
> **These metaphysics of magicians,**
> **And necromantic books are heavenly."**

By selling his soul to the Devil he lives a blasphemous life full of vain and sensual pleasures just for twenty-four years. He does not shirk from insulting and even assaulting the Pope with the Holy Fathers at Rome. Of course, there is a fierce struggle in his soul between his over-weening ambition and conscience, between the Good Angel and Evil Angel that externalise the inner conflict. But Faustus ultimately surrenders to the allurements of the Evil Angel, thereby paving his way for eternal damnation. And what does happen to this great egotist as well as agonistic with his craze for limitless power and pelf, with his inordinate ambition to unravel all the mysteries of the universe? When the final hour approaches, Faustus, to his utmost pain and horror, realises that his sins are unpardonable and nothing can save him from eternal damnation. And before the devils snatch away his soul to burning hell, the excruciating pangs of a deeply agonised soul find the most poignant expression in Faustus's final soliloquy:

> **"My God, my God, look not so fierce to me!**
> **Adders and serpents, let me breath a while!**
> **Ugly hell, gape not: come not Lucifer:**
> **I'll burn my books: Ah, Mephistophilis!"**

Thus we find Marlowe in keeping with the traditions of Miracles and Moralities, depicts the destiny of a man who denies God to be finally doomed to eternal damnation.

Moral Sermon or Didactic Aim: -The chief aim of Morality plays was didactic—it was a dramatized guide to Christian living and Christian dying. Whoever discards the path of virtue and abjures faith in God and Christ is destined to despair and eternal damnation—this is also the message of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. And it has found the most touching expression in the mournful monody of the Chorus in the closing lines of the play:

> **"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,**
> **And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,**
> **That sometimes grew within this learned man.**
> **Faustus is gone; regard his hellish fall.**
> **Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise.**
> **Only to wonder at unlawful things,**
> **Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits**
> **To practise more than heavenly power permits"**

Hudson has rightly said: "No finer sermon than Marlowe's Faustus ever came from the pulpit. What more fearsome exposure was ever offered of the punishment man brings upon himself by giving way to temptation of his grosser appetites."

Allegory or Personified Abstractions: -It has already been mentioned that in Morality plays the characters were allegorical—they were personified abstractions of vice or virtues. So in Doctor Faustus also we find the Good and Evil Angels, the former standing for the path of virtue and the latter for sin and damnation. Then we have the Old Man appearing in Scene I (Act V) "to guide thy steps unto the way of life."—symbolising the forces of righteousness and morality. The Seven Deadly Sins of good old Mystery and Morality plays are also very much there in a grand spectacle to cheer up the despairing soul of Faustus. And the old favourite and familiar figure of the devil is also not missing. Mephistopheles, an assistant if Lucifer, appears as servile slave of Faustus in many scenes in the guise of a Franciscan Friar symbolizing power without conscience. But Marlowe's Devil is a devil with difference, as he has been endowed with some original traits.

Comic Element: - The comic scenes of Doctor Faustus also belong to the tradition of old Miracle and Morality plays. The comic scenes with its buffoonery were not integral parts of those plays but were introduced to entertain and to raise hoars-laughter, as in the case of a realistic comic scene where Noah was shown beating his wife for refusing to enter the ark. The same is the case with almost all the five comic scenes in Doctor Faustus—especially in Scene I of the third Act where Faustus is found playing vile tricks on the Pope and the 2nd scene of Act IV where the horse-courser is totally outwitted and befooled by Faustus.

Other Elements: - In the earlier plays there is no inter-play of character. In Doctor Faustus, also there is only one towering central figure and all the action and incidents centre round him. Then, just like the earlier Miracle or Morality plays, it also suffers from looseness of construction—especially in the middle part of the play.

Conclusion: - In spite of all its links with medieval Miracles or Moralities, Doctor Faustus can never be treated wholly as a Morality play. It is the greatest heroic tragedy before Shakespeare with its enormous stress on characterization and inner conflict in the soul of a towering personality. We may conclude in the words of a critic: Doctor Faustus is both the consummation of the English Morality tradition and the last and the finest of Marlowe's heroic plays. As a Morality, it vindicates humility, faith and obedience to the law of God; as a heroic play it celebrates power, beauty, riches and knowledge, and seems a sequel to the plays of "Tamburlaine the great."

Autobiographical Note in Faustus

Introduction: A study of Marlowe's great tragedies cannot but convince us that Marlowe possessed the power in its fullest degree of projecting himself into his chief characters. The most important quality of his works is the subjective or autobiography note. Here lies the greatest difference between Shakespeare and Marlowe as dramatists. There is a complete effacement of Shakespeare's personality in his plays. We cannot say that this or that passage reveals Shakespeare's personality or mind. But Marlowe couldn't but project his personality into the chief characters of his plays – especially in his four great tragedies: Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta and Edward II.

Marlowe's Life and the Spirit of Renaissance: Before discussing the subjective note in his plays any further, we should have a fair idea of Marlowe's life, his career, the influence of the Renaissance on him, and his ambitions. Marlowe came of parents ' base of stock'. He was the son of a shoe maker. But he was fortunate enough to get school

education and had a chance to go to Cambridge to specialize in theology and got Doctorate in Divinity. But his abandoned his career in theology and joined the theatrical companies in London to become a dramatist. But seeing a difference between himself as poor and his companions as rich, though they were much inferior to him in intellect, Marlowe rebelled against the established norms. This was also perhaps the main cause of his rebellion against religion and its normal orders. He was much criticized and branded as the Atheist. He also possessed a dual personality. He was a dramatist and poet in London, but also had relations with the underworld. However, Marlowe was a man of the Renaissance and an embodiment of the spirit of his age. He was a saturated with the spirit of learning, exploring and experimenting with its hankering after sensual pleasure of life and with its inordinate ambition and supreme lust for power and pelf. He was profoundly influenced by Machiavelli, the famous Italian social and political writer, who discarded all conventional moral principles to achieve the end by any means, fair or foul.

Reflection of Marlowe in his tragic Heroes A close and critical study of works of Marlowe convinces us that all his tragic heroes clearly reveal the chief characteristics and temperament of the great dramatist. All his tragic heroes are absolutely dominated by some uncontrollable passion. To achieve their end, they throw overboard all established moral scruples or religious sanctions and never avoid using horrible means, for example, his cruel and tyrant Tamburlaine with his craze for limitless power defies all authorities on earth and in the heaven. His stone-heated Barabas is dominated by a senseless craze for gold and doesn’t shirk from committing the worst type of crimes to achieve his end, thus he seems to be an embodiment of Machiavellism. To gain super human powers through knowledge, his Doctor Faustus sells his soul to the Devil in pursuit of his passion. His heroes have a scant regard for religion as Faustus says, “ I count religion but a childish toy” another significant point is that all tragic heroes of Marlowe are poets and convey their feelings and emotions to the audience in the superb poetic language, but of all Faustus is a poet par excellence just like Marlowe himself.

Marlowe and Faustus-A Striking Parallelism: Of all the tragic heroes of Marlowe, Faustus bears the most striking reflection of Marlowe’s own self. We know that Marlowe was the second child of a Canterbury shoe-maker and in the very beginning of the play, we are told of Faustus’ parentage as: Now is he born, his parents base of stock. Harold Osborne has pointed out that Marlowe like Faustus came of parents ‘base of stock’ and was destined for the church but turned elsewhere. We should not press the analogies too far, but we cannot ignore them as the parallelism is too obvious.

Personal Tragedy: Spiritual Suffering: Doctor Faustus very powerfully expresses Marlowe’s innermost thoughts and authentic experiences. So it can be regarded the spiritual history of Marlowe himself. Marlowe’s inordinate ambition led him to revolt against religion and society, to defy the laws of man and laws of God and such defiance is bound to bring up acute mental conflict resulting in deep despair and certain defeat. So, both Marlowe and Faustus experience terrible mental pangs and agonies. Osborne has rightly observed:

The descriptions of Faustus’ repentance, despair and mental anguish are among the most vivid and poignant parts of the play. It is, of course, possible to suppose that Marlowe had passed through a stage of youthful skepticism in religion and that with a sounder and deeper faith he had come to the knowledge of repentance.

Conclusion Doctor Faustus' tragic death also has resemblance. After living twenty four years in sensual activities, Faustus had to surrender his soul to the Devil. Marlowe's Bohemian and boisterous life, too came to a tragic sudden end in tavern brawl at the hands of a shady character of the London Underworld at the age of twenty nine. Marlowe lost himself into his works.

Doctor Faustus is strewn with unmistakably autobiographical suggestions. Reading the play we cannot refrain from concluding that it is the spontaneous expression of its writer's innermost thoughts and authentic experiences.

Doctor Faustus – a Psychological tragedy

Spiritual Combat: Tragedy is regarded as the highest aspect of the dramatic art as in it our emotions are more profoundly stirred than in comedy thereby rendering it more universal in it appeal. And conflict is the essence of or soul of tragedy. All previous dramas including Tamburlaine had dealt with single-minded individuals. If a struggle in the heart of the hero was introduced, it was like that of Morality plays.

It was external as in the Jew of Malta because it was between the hero and his adversaries. Doctor Faustus attempted something different. It is a drama of spiritual combat within the soul of man. This struggle is certainly somewhat primitive in its expression but it is a foretaste of those inner characteristics towards which a drama in its development inevitably trends. Faustus in this respect is unquestionably the greatest tragic figure in sixteenth century outside the work of Shakespeare. It is also a modern tragedy because Marlowe broke away from the old Aristotelian concept of tragic hero as being a royal figure of some very lofty stature. He introduced Faustus who is not a prince or a king but a common learned man whose parents are base of stock.

Tragic Flaw – cause of his tragedy According to Aristotle, the tragic hero must have some inherent weakness – a tragic flaw which he referred to as Hamartia. He should be neither totally vicious nor good. As per Doctor Faustus, he is puffed with pride and his wisdom. He has studied all branches of knowledge and wants to get infinite knowledge. The boundless mastery of all sciences. So, he acquires necromancy in order to gain the ultimate. He says,

> **A sound magician is a mighty god:**
> **Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity.**

Despite all his scholarly personality and his learning, we witness how he surrenders his soul to the Devil for a span of twenty four years and instead of gaining the deity and mastering and commandeering all the elements, he stands doomed and cursed.

Internal Tragic Conflict: Marlowe's contribution to the English or Elizabethan drama was great and many fold. One of his contributions was the introduction of internal tragic conflict in the mind of the tragic hero. Nicoll has rightly observed: "All previous dramas including Tamburlaine had dealt with single-minded individuals. If a struggle in the heart of the hero was introduced, it was like that of Morality plays. In Doctor Faustus, Marlowe attempted something new – the delineation of struggle in the mind of the hero. This struggle is certainly somewhat primitive in its expression but it is a foretaste of those inner characteristics towards which a drama in its development inevitably trends. Faustus in this respect is unquestionably the greatest tragic figure in sixteenth century outside the work of Shakespeare."

So in Doctor Faustus, we find the conflict or the psychological struggle raging in the heart and soul of the hero. In fact, there's hardly any external action. The delineation of a psychological struggle or spiritual conflict in the mind of the hero is the chief thing. Then why is this struggle and to what is it due? Generally, the inner conflict takes places when man is faced with two alternatives, one of which he must have to choose, but he finds himself pulled in opposite directions. Now Faustus is inspired by the spirit of the Renaissance, by dreams of gaining limitless knowledge and super-human powers. These he can attain only by resorting to necromancy, discarding religious dogmas and abjuring the Trinity and denouncing the established religious norms. Doctor Faustus may reject all these intellectually, but he is very much emotionally attached to them. He may be acting like an atheist, but his flesh and blood is saturated with Christianity. Here the conflict starts between will and conscience externalized by the Good and Bad Angel. We can follow this conflict in the play at three stages: The First Stage: we see how pride and ambition lead Faustus into the vicious bargain with the Devil. He convinces himself that: A sound magician is a mighty god. He also says with perfect faith in Mephistopheles, "Had I as many souls as there are stars, I would give them all for Mephistopheles, By him I will great emperor of the world" Nicholas Brooke says: Faustus wants to satisfy the demands of his nature as God has made him. He wants to be the Deity. For this, he must deny Christianity as did Lucifer, but Faustus' attachment to religion is too deep to be rooted out. Throughout the play we find Faustus pricked by his conscience, we find him in tussle between will and conscience in the form of Good and Bad Angel. The Second Stage: At this stage, we see Faustus struggling hard to break away from the impeding doom and he turns to repentance.

> **When I behold the heavens, then I repent**
> **And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis,**
> **Because thou hast depriv'd me of those joys**

The two angles appear again. One advises him to return to repentance and the other tells him that he is a spirit and God will not help him now and that he will tear his body to pieces if he repents. He has to submit to the will of Lucifer and refresh his bond with him. The show of Seven Deadly Sins and the best of all the apparition of Helen temporarily soothe his damned soul. The Third and Final Scene: In the closing scene, we find the climax culminating into a horrible catastrophe. Faustus knows that he is eternally doomed; but his poignant soliloquy and appeal for redemption is pathetic and pitiable. His last minute frantic appeal, to the ever moving spheres of heaven to stand still or to the sun to rise again to make perpetual day, stirs the readers' soul and refresh in him the spirit of religious faith. Later, his soul is taken away by the devils leaving a short visual scene repeating itself in the reader's mind. The show of Seven Deadly Sins is presented to please Doctor Faustus and remove his internal conflict between the good and the bad. So the seven sins – Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery. Some critics are of the view that the show is meant for comic relief for the audience. But this is hardly to accept. In fact the show is not meant for a comic relief, but is really meant for bringing back Faustus to the path to hell when he was much irritated by Mephistopheles for not telling him the right answers. In fact, the sins already abide in Doctor Faustus' soul; the show merely symbolizes or externalizes them.

Disintegration: Doctor Faustus is thus the tragedy of a man who in striving boundlessly, misdirects great gifts of mind and spirit and hence progressively loses his soul by disintegration. Progressive disintegration in Faustus brings low comedy into the

tragedy. In the last act, Faustus repents, then despairs and is about to commit suicide. But his distressed soul is comforted by the Old Man. The feeling cannot exist, however, without the support of the Old Man's presence; as soon as he goes Faustus exclaims: I do repent; and yet I do despair. Mephistopheles forces him to sign another bond to strengthen the contract.

Psychological tragedy: Thus we find that in Doctor Faustus, Marlowe reveals for the first time in English drama the full possibilities of psychological tragedy, the anguish of a mind at war with itself. The play depicts the tragedy of the human soul, and in the closing scene it achieves end with a strength and intensity as yet unknown in English drama. We conclude with the words of Una Ellis Fermor: In Marlowe's great tragic fragment the conflict is not between man and man for the domination of one character over another or in the interaction of a group of characters. Thus and in such terms is staged the greatest conflict that drama has ever undertaken to the present.

The Last Scene: Helen of Troy and the Old man in " Doctor Faustus"

Introduction: - Faustus's great final soliloquy consummates the play. The last scene of the play is the most poignant. The last scene, be it in the form of Helen's presence or the final beseeching of Doctor Faustus, makes Marlowe reach the flights imagination. We may divide last scene of the play into three parts: First the Helen Episode, Second the Old Man and the Last soliloquy of Doctor Faustus. The three parts of the play make up the whole last scene to abide in our thoughts.

The Helen Episode: - When 'music sounds' and Helen passes across the stage, her sanctity is mirrored in the awed calm of the scholars. Her "heavenly beauty passeth all compare" She is the pride of the nature's work. Here outburst the eternal words of praise for Helen from Doctor Faustus who, in the most ravishing way, loses himself in the arms of Helen to avoid his imminent doom.

Was this the face that launce'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? -
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again,
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee.
Instead of Troy , shall Wittenberg be sack'd:
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colors on my plumed crest;
Yes, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
O, thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousands starts;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter

Faustus's poetry for Helen shows his ultimate desperate condition and his futile effort to evade the eternal doom.

The Old man: - Doctor Faustus is 'But a man condemned to die.' Soon after the appearance of Helen, the old man approaches Doctor Faustus to reconcile him. The Old Man's compassionate advice to Faustus adds a new dimension to our senses of the human predicament.

Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soul if sin by custom grows not into nature.

The Old Man is, rather the last man trying to pull Faustus from the snaps of death. But Faustus, as he is eternally doomed, must reach his self-imposed torments of hell.

The Last hour: - As Faustus's fascination for Helen, 'The only paragon of excellence' reveals the Renaissance characteristics of love and adoration of classical art and beauty, Helen epitomizes the charms of classical art, learning and beauty. And her shade of apparition may also be the symbol of sensual pleasures of life which is but transient, and leads to despair and damnation. If it is so, the old man represents Christian faith with its obedience to the laws of God and its needs for prayer and penitence that can assure eternal joys and bliss. Doctor Faustus knows that his end is approaching. The proud and puffed scholar of Wittenberg, who once dreamed of becoming a Jove on the earth, ironically craves to be transformed into some mean creature so as to escape his doom. And when the last hour strikes, we find the anguished cry of a terror-stricken man who is facing his damnation.

> **O, it strikes: No body turn to air,**
> **Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell,**
> **O, soul, be changed into little water drops.**
> **And fall into the ocean, never be found!**

Critics and scholars of one opinion that the last scene of the play is highly consummate and grim.

Doctor Faustus: Hero, Villain, or Hybrid?

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is a complex character. Whether or not to feel pity for the misguided scholar is a debatable issue, but he does seem to possess some "evil" qualities. Some consider him a tragic hero, while others would argue he better fulfills the role of a villain. But really, who is Doctor Faustus? Taking into consideration the defining characteristics of both the tragic hero and the villain while comparing them to the doctor leads one to the conclusion that Faustus does not completely fit into either category, but rather belongs to the more specific genre of the Elizabethan villain-hero, which encompasses both his hero and villain sides.

The concept of the "tragic hero" was defined by Aristotle, and applies to many protagonists in a variety of plays. According to Aristotle's definition, in order to be classified as a tragic hero, the character must fulfill the following criteria: be born into a noble standing, possess a tragic flaw which causes his downfall, experience an unfortunate event as a result of this flaw, eventually acquire an increased sense of self-awareness, and be pitied by the audience. It is important to note that Aristotle also argued that a man cannot be considered a tragic hero without realizing the cause of his downfall (Perrine). Doctor Faustus only fulfills some of these requirements, and falls short of the most important and necessary characteristics needed in order to be classified as a tragic hero. Most importantly, Faustus seems to have too many amoral tendencies in order to be considered a hero of any sort. It seems that Marlowe kept the

distinction between Faustus as a hero and Faustus as a villain so ambiguous as a reflection on the ambiguity of morality itself. Marlowe would argue that many organized religions make morality into a very black and white concept; those that pray and attend church services are good, while those who renounce God and do not repent are bad. In actuality, even someone like Faustus, who sold his own soul to the devil, does not seem one hundred percent evil, nor fully good.

Faustus, on one hand, does possess what can be considered a tragic flaw: ambition. In Act I of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, Faustus is contemplating his life and suggests to himself,

"Be a physician, Faustus. Heap up gold,
And be eternized for some wondrous cure"

. Here, the audience begins to see that Doctor Faustus has many goals and dreams in his life, and he has already achieved much success as a doctor and a scholar. It seems that Marlowe would not view ambition as a negative trait under usual circumstances. The reason why it became a problem for Faustus was because it was coupled with pride, and a frustration with worldly pursuits. Faustus became bored with mortal matters and felt he could master the realm of dark magic, which ultimately led to his deal with the devil and his own downfall. Ambition alone is not what doomed Faustus. Without his pride and overwhelming desire to go beyond the limits of what man should know, he could have been safe from an eternity in hell.

It could be argued that Faustus both experiences a reversal in fortune and that he is, as a character, pitiable. The ultimate instance in the play in which Faustus' luck takes a turn for the worst is when he first summons Mephistopheles, and subsequently signs the contract with the devil, selling his soul to Lucifer. However, the actual reversal of fortune occurs when Faustus dies and is taken to hell by Lucifer's demons, because when he first sells his soul, Faustus has no problem with what he is done and is not yet affected negatively by his choice, but when he is taken to hell he is extremely upset and panicked. As far as Faustus' pitiable nature is concerned, Marlowe left this rather ambiguous. Again, this is most likely a commentary on how morality, like Faustus, can be extremely ambiguous, and the lines between good and evil are often blurred or unclear. Additionally, the "noble birth" of Faustus is debatable. His social and economic standing is comfortable, probably above average and definitely not impoverished, but he is not of standard nobility. He has no title, and his highest degree of ranking is that he is a scholarly doctor. Most importantly, Faustus never takes full responsibility for his damnation, which Aristotle would argue is the most important quality of the tragic hero.

Doctor Faustus as a villain is a difficult argument to make. For starters, there are no set guidelines for what qualifies a character as a true "villain," like there are qualifications for the tragic hero. Villain is such a broad and vague term that it makes more sense to discuss Doctor Faustus as a subtype of a villain: the Elizabethan villain-hero. Clara F. McIntyre discusses the qualities of this villain-hero in her article for the PMLA journal. Quoting Clarence Boyer, McIntyre notes that a villain is most commonly identified as "a man who, for a selfish end, willfully and deliberately violates standards of morality sanctioned by the audience or ordinary reader" (McIntyre 874). This description fits Doctor Faustus well, but Boyer goes on to comment that if the villain is cast as the main character of the play, than he fulfills the role of the villain as a hero. Since Faustus is quite obviously the main character of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, it is clear that he would fit into this villain-hero category. Furthermore, he clearly "violates standards of morality"

by selling his soul to the devil, an act which modern audiences still find immoral and reprehensible, feelings which were even stronger for the more religiously-influenced audiences of the Elizabethan time period. After deciding he wants to dabble in black magic, Faustus even proclaims "Divinity, adieu!" clearly turning away from God, the epitome of morality (I.i.78).

McIntyre also explains that the villain-hero is different from the standard villain in that he does not act out of "personal malignity," but rather from "an unwavering determination to further [his] own interests" (McIntyre 878). This describes Faustus extremely accurately, especially when one examines his motives for working with black magic in the first place. Faustus did not want to call upon devils in order to seek revenge, rule the world, or for assistance in any other selfish or evil plan. Ultimately, he was bored with all he had accomplished so far and wanted to learn something new, something which he originally intended to use to help other people.

When he was first contemplating what he would do with the kind of power dark magic would bestow upon him, Faustus fantasizes about what he would have his demons do:

"I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates."

Nothing about "princely delicates" seems malignant or malicious in the slightest, proving the Faustus was seeking self-satisfaction in an albeit material, but harmless way. Faustus continues his musings, saying:

"I'll have them fill the public schools with silk,
Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad
I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the Prince of Parma from out land"

Again Faustus is proving that not only were his original intentions harmless and self-indulgent (an example of "furthering his own interests"), but he also had thoughts of using this power to help other people, such as students.

One of the most interesting points McIntyre makes is that some villain-heroes are capable of genuine remorse, which often is not typical of a regular villain. McIntyre does point out that this remorse is most often on the villain-hero's deathbed, and "seems to proceed less from genuine repentance than from a sense that the game is up" (McIntyre 877). Of all the characteristics of the villain-hero previously discussed, Faustus shows the strongest evidence of this one. In the final hour of his life, Faustus realizes his fate and desperately calls out to the forces of nature and the heavens, begging for more time on earth. Faustus calls out to God, Lucifer, and everyone in between, trying to grapple with the consequences of his actions and see if there is anyone he can appeal to for salvation. He cries out:

You stars that reigned at my nativity,
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist
Into the entrails of yon laboring cloud,
That when you vomit forth into the air,
My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,

So that my soul may but ascend to heaven.

Faustus expresses his desire for more time to live, for repentance, and yet he never actually repents. Perhaps he does this because he is not physically capable of repenting because of the contract he made with the devil, but more likely it is because his repentance and remorse would not be genuine. He is not actually sorry for what he has done because he still has not taken responsibility for his actions. Ultimately, he just wants to avoid suffering in hell, and only tries to call out to God during the last minutes of his life.

Although many would argue that Faustus fits the mold of the typical tragic hero, close examination of the qualities necessary for this role makes it obvious that Faustus cannot be considered a hero in any sense of the word. He never takes responsibility for his actions, he barely evokes any sense of pity out of the audience, and he gains limited self-awareness and knowledge from his experience. However, he is not a clear-cut villain either. There are no real set guidelines for what makes a character a villain, but in a general sense, Faustus is not fully evil. A more accurate term for Faustus would be a villain-hero, a character typical during the Elizabethan time period. By name alone, a villain-hero sums up Faustus' conflicting personality traits that make the audience see him as both a good man, and also an immoral fool. Neither fully bad nor fully good, Faustus straddles the fence between hero and villain, ultimately combining characteristics of the two to become the Elizabethan villain-hero.

Doctor Faustus : Tragedy of an aspiring intellect doomed to failure

Introduction: - Doctor Faustus, a unique creation of Christopher Marlowe, conveys a deep conception of tragedy. In awe inspiring and terror, the play fulfils one of the true functions of tragedy. It thrills us because there is something of the 'desire of the moth for the star' of Faustus's desire to conquer human limitation, in all of us, and we are fascinated by the audacity with which he persists in his desperate course.

Extraordinary Courage and Indomitable Will: - Doctor Faustus deals with the heroic struggle of a 'great souled' man doomed to inevitable defeat. The entire interest in a Marlovian tragedy centres round the personality of the hero, and the pleasure comes from watching the greatness and fall of a superhuman personality. And ordinary German scholar, in the beginning, Faustus's intellectual endowment raises him to the status of a great hero. He has the genuine passion for knowledge infinite. With his inordinate ambition he soars beyond the petty possibilities of humanity, leagues himself with superhuman powers and rides through space in a fiery chariot exploring the secrets of the universe.

Marlowe's Faustus aspires to be more than man and therefore repudiates his humanity and rebels against the ultimate reality. Being a true Renaissance hero, he surpasses his mortal bounds to be as powerful on earth as Jove in sky. He finds some hope only in Necromancy. He, therefore, turns to Magic and is elated by its prospects of profit, delight, power, honour, for:

All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command…………
A sound magician is a mighty God……..

Endowed with extraordinary courage and will to pursue his goal relentlessly and recklessly, without caring for good and evil, Faustus is really a tragic hero. He strives to satisfy his overriding desires, rejecting the will of God or servitude, and asserting his will both in opposition to God as well as the Devil.

Tussle between orthodoxy and quest for intellectual freedom: - Marlowe's Faustus, the tragic hero, is afire with an indomitable passion. He discards all moral codes and ethical principles and plunges headlong to achieve his end. But in rejecting Christian values, there arises in his mind a deep conflict between the pull of tradition, the Will of God, and the desire to learn more and more to taste the fruits of the forbidden tree. The heart of Faustus turns out to be the battlefield where the forces of good and evil are trying to overwhelm each other. Faustus makes his own choice to take to the black art of magic deliberately and then sells his soul to the Devil of his free will. Faustus is a modern man whose conscious self is opposed by the subconscious self which is deeply attached to the conventional doctrines and dogmas of Christian theology.

Throughout the play, Faustus staggers between doubt and faith symbolised by the warnings of the God Angel and the seductions of Bad Angel, as he moves towards his inevitable doom. He has been told by Mephistophilis the meaning of Hell, but in his blind arrogance, he refuses to really grasp the implications of his action. Indeed, before the end of the play Faustus undergoes the mental torture born out of the opposing pulls of his rational and emotional selves. To Mephistophilis, he can arrogantly assert:

Thinkest thou that Faustus is so fond to imagine
That after this life, there is any pain?
Tush! these are trifles and mere old wives' tales.

But Faustus cannot avoid the mental tortures that must follow every act of sin or crime. A guilty conscience pricks him almost from the beginning to the end of this tragic drama. Doctor Faustus is a tragedy connected with man's intellectual faculties and his rejection of voluntary subjection of them to an orthodox order of Christianity.

Tragedy: the outcome of the hero's inherent weakness and presumption: -

Marlowe's Faustus prides himself in his great learning and scholarship. He is dominated by ambition to acquire knowledge infinite and through it to gain superhuman power and satisfy his sensuous and mundane pleasures of life. His weakness is not a mechanical outcome of his pact with the Devil. The seeds of decay are in his character from the first, half hidden in the Marlovian glamour cast about him, though he has intense desire to know the truth and he comes to make his rash and fatal bargain. Furthermore, in the true Aristotelian sense, he is blind to the actual implications of his action. This is the tragedy. His sensual pleasures override all other passions and blind him to the dreadful truth. The vision of Helen conceals the vision of Absolute Truth from the eyes of Faustus. Faustus is conscious of the weakness, but he has no control over his overriding desires. 'The vision of Helen' allures him and her unrealisable beauty penetrates his spirits to the depths:

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Faustus, we realize, is doomed, far from being able to reach immortality.

Tragic irony: The essence of all great tragedy, and Doctor Faustus embodies this irony poignantly: - Possessed with supernatural powers to perform great things, Faustus fails due to his uncontrollable human weakness. He sets out to gain a deity, but ends with a wish to be turned into something inanimate. He comes to understand his predicament towards the end and cries: "But Faustus's offence can never be pardoned, the serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus." In the last but one hour of his life, Faustus stands on the brink of everlasting ruin and damnation, waiting for the fatal moment. He realizes that the pact with the Devil has got him nothing. He had sought to control the stars once but they:

> **Move still, time runs, the clock will strike.**
> **The devil will come and Faustus must be damned…….**

The play, in its final twist, turns supremely tragic as Faustus collapses into simultaneous submission to both his bosses, Lucifer and Christ. Doctor Faustus depicts the human soul as a tragic battlefield where the hero meets with tragic failure.

Cathartic effect: the emotions of pity and fear:- In the hands of Marlowe, Faustus acquires a spiritual greatness which, in the finest moments of the play, wins him our sympathy, and at his death arouses that pity and terror which great tragedy demands. Marlowe has felt and conveyed the sense of tragedy in Faustus's aspirations and downfall. Faustus is seen as a symbol of Marlowe's times when wonders of the mind and of the world were being discovered and people's hopes of the attainable were full of ardour.

Faustus's summoning of Mephistophilis, his signing of the contract, his vision of Helen, and his final death and damnation are the outstanding scenes of the play, in which "the medley of desire and fear, the poignancy of regret, the ecstasy and the terror are depicted with sureness and strength which give them a place among the greatest emotional situations in Elizabethan tragedy." Faustus's final monologue is unsurpassed in English drama, in the expression of sheer agony and horror. As he cries with ringing despair:

> **O I'll leap up to my God, who pulls me down?**
> **See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament,**
> **One drop would save my soul, half a drop, ah, my Christ…..**

The tragic emotions of pity and fear at the plight of such a great man tugs at our heart. The tragedy achieves its climatic cathartic effect in Faustus's last shriek, "Mephistophilis."

Conclusion: - Doctor Faustus is a tragedy of an aspiring intellect which seeks to pierce through to the centre of all knowledge. Such ambition is doomed to failure because of its very nature, for man is a limited being. The courage of the challenge, however, is awesome.

Atheism in Doctor Faustus

Christopher Marlowe's theological disposition is one that has been debated and particularly comes into focus in the play Doctor Faustus, where the central theme is the eternal salvation or damnation of Faustus. While it was the common thematic focus of theatre at the time, one might question why a man who was believed to be atheist would

compose a tragedy with heavy religious themes. The reason for this is most likely to critique the Christian belief systems at the time.

The initial instance in which divinity is addressed in the play is in the first scene where Faustus analyzes popular metaphysics. In his rejection of Christianity, he cites that belief in Christianity only leads to death, the result of sin. The irony of this is that he neglected to read the rest of the passage which states that God provides eternal life. Marlowe uses this moment as a hyperbole to draw attention to the Calvinistic belief of predestination. When Faustus states "Che Sera Sera," what will be shall be, he is essentially saying that there's no point in studying religion when the outcome would be determined regardless of your actions. This causes Faustus to believe that religion will cause him to die an eternal death, the logical opposite to eternal life.

The topic of the "eternal death" is also one discussed in the play through the character of Mephistopheles. Mephistopheles states in the fifth scene that he is in hell wherever he is because Hell is not a place, but rejection from the gates of Heaven. Faustus, on the other hand conceives Hell as a location. This is shown through his disbelief of Mephistopheles' statement about hell. This is also portrayed when he swears by Hell's waterways of Styx, Archeron, and Phlegethon, as described by The Divine Comedy. Faustus' represents the proverbial Everyman; he I inherently flawed. This representation applies to man's view of Hell and how it is unsound. Mephistopheles, on the other hand is a heavenly being whose understanding of the afterlife is empirical. Through this scene, Marlowe conjectures that religion is fallible, because the embodiment of Hell, one of its main components, is conceived by man, not created by God. This would mean that Christianity could not be taken seriously.

The most easily recognizable scene that enforces Marlowe's opinions regarding religion is when Faustus plays childish pranks on the pope. Aside from being an entertaining aspect for the largely protestant audience of British theatre, it provides a charge on both Catholicism and the protestant split. Marlowe utilizes the opulence of the Pope's lifestyle to satirize the fact that Catholics venerate the pope, who is no more divine in his ambitions than the next man. Faustus' pranks also serve as a comparison to the protestant church challenging the Catholic Church. The childish antics of Faustus seem to say something about Marlowe's opinions about the schism in the church.

In the end of the play, an old man urges Faustus to repent. While Faustus could still repent according to most Christian beliefs, his refusal to do so results in his eternal damnation. At this point, it appears that Faustus has the ability to repent when the old man attempts to convince him to. The reality of the matter, however, is embodied in Mephistopheles' threat to Faustus. He states that he will "arrest" Faustus' soul if he does not come with him. This means that, while it appears he has had a chance for salvation, his consorting with the devil has made repentance an impossibility.

Throughout the play, Faustus does little wrong in terms of his actions. These are petty pranks with no real negative implications. Despite this, he ends up separated from God. Marlowe uses this point as a satirical commentary of the beliefs of the protestant church. He shows how the Protestants belief that the eternal fate of an individual's soul is not dependant on the dealings that person has done in life, but solely on whether or not the person accepts that Christianity is an absolute truth.

Christopher Marlowe uses his tragedy, Doctor Faustus to contest and satirize Christianity. His commentary addresses many different denominations. The underlying remarks further reinforce the belief that Marlowe was an atheist. Multiple instances throughout the play support his views on the church and explain his motives in writing Doctor Faustus.

Othello

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE; 1564-1616

Personal History

Many books have assembled facts, reasonable suppositions, traditions, and speculations concerning the life and career of William Shakespeare. Taken as a whole, these materials give a rather comprehensive picture of England's foremost dramatic poet. Tradition and sober supposition are not necessarily false because they lack proven bases for their existence. It is important, however, that persons interested in Shakespeare should distinguish between facts and beliefs about his life.

From one point of view, modern scholars are fortunate to know as much as they do about a man of middle-class origin who left a small country town and embarked on a professional career in sixteenth-century London. From another point of view, they know surprisingly little about the writer who has continued to influence the English language and its drama and poetry for more than three hundred years. Sparse and scattered as these facts of his life are, they are sufficient to prove that a man from Stratford by the name of William Shakespeare wrote the major portion of the thirty-seven plays that scholars ascribe to him. The concise review that follows will concern itself with some of these records.

No one knows the exact date of William Shakespeare's birth. His baptism occurred on Wednesday, April 26, 1564. His father was John Shakespeare, tanner, glover, dealer in grain, and town official of Stratford; his mother, Mary, was the daughter of Robert Arden, a prosperous gentleman-farmer. The Shakespeares lived on Henley Street.

Under a bond dated November 28, 1582, William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway entered into a marriage contract. The baptism of their eldest child, Susanna, took place in Stratford in May, 1583. One year and nine months later their twins, Hamnet and Judith, were christened in the same church. The parents named them for the poet's friends, Hamnet and Judith Sadler.

Early in 1596, William Shakespeare, in his father's name, applied to the College of Heralds for a coat of arms. Although positive proof is lacking, there is reason to believe that the Heralds granted this request, for in 1599 Shakespeare again made application for the right to quarter his coat of arms with that of his mother. Entitled to her father's coat of arms, Mary had lost this privilege when she married John Shakespeare before he held the official status of gentleman.

In May of 1597, Shakespeare purchased New Place, the outstanding residential property in Stratford at that time. Since John Shakespeare had suffered financial reverses prior to this date, William must have achieved success for himself.

Court records show that in 1601-1602, William Shakespeare began rooming in the household of Christopher Mountjoy in London. Subsequent disputes over the wedding settlement and agreement between Mountjoy and his son-in-law, Stephen Belott, led to a series of legal actions, and in 1612 the court scribe recorded Shakespeare's deposition of testimony relating to the case. In July, 1605, William Shakespeare paid four hundred and forty pounds for the lease of a large portion of the tithes on certain real estate in and near Stratford. This was an arrangement whereby Shakespeare purchased half the annual tithes, or taxes, on certain agricultural products from parcels of land in and near Stratford. In addition to receiving approximately 10 percent income on his investment, he almost doubled his capital. This was possibly the most important and successful investment of his lifetime, and it paid a steady income for many years.

Shakespeare is next mentioned when John Combe, a resident of Stratford, died on July 12, 1614. To his friend, Combe bequeathed the sum of five pounds. These records and similar ones are important, not because of their economic significance but because they

prove the existence of William Shakespeare in Stratford and in London during this period.

On March 25, 1616, William Shakespeare revised his last will and testament. He died on April 23 of the same year. His body lies within the chancel and before the altar of the Stratford church. A rather wry inscription is carved upon his tombstone:

Good Friend, for Jesus' sake, forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here;
Blest be the man that spares these bones
And curst be he who moves my bones.

The last direct descendant of William Shakespeare was his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall, who died in 1670.

These are the most outstanding facts about Shakespeare the man, as apart from those about the dramatist and poet. Such pieces of information, scattered from 1564 through 1616, declare the existence of such a person, not as a writer or actor, but as a private citizen. It is illogical to think that anyone would or could have fabricated these details for the purpose of deceiving later generations.

Shakespeare's Work

In similar fashion, the evidence establishing William Shakespeare as the foremost playwright of his day is positive and persuasive. Robert Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, in which he attacked Shakespeare, a mere actor, for presuming to write plays in competition with Greene and his fellow playwrights, was entered in the Stationers' Register on September 20, 1592. In 1594, Shakespeare acted before Queen Elizabeth, and in 1594-1595, his name appeared as one of the shareholders of the Lord Chamberlain's Company. Francis Meres in his Palladis Tamia (1598) called Shakespeare "mellifluous and hony-tongued" and compared his comedies and tragedies with those of Plautus and Seneca in excellence.

Shakespeare's continued association with Burbage's company is equally definite. His name appears as one of the owners of the Globe (a theater) in 1599. On May 19, 1603, he and his fellow actors received a patent from James I designating them as the King's Men and making them Grooms of the Chamber. Late in 1608 or early in 1609, Shakespeare and his colleagues purchased the Blackfriars Theatre and began using it as their winter location when weather made production at the Globe inconvenient.

Other specific allusions to Shakespeare and to his acting and his writing occur in numerous places. Put together, they form irrefutable testimony that William Shakespeare of Stratford and London was the leader among Elizabethan playwrights.

One of the most impressive of all proofs of Shakespeare's authorship of his plays is the First Folio of 1623, with the dedicatory verse that appeared in it. John Heminge and Henry Condell, members of Shakespeare's own company, stated that they collected and issued the plays as a memorial to their fellow actor. Many contemporary poets contributed eulogies to Shakespeare; one of the best known of these poems is by Ben Jonson, a fellow actor and, later, a friendly rival. Jonson also criticized Shakespeare's dramatic work in Timber: or, Discoveries (1641).

Certainly there are many things about Shakespeare's genius and career that the most diligent scholars do not know and cannot explain, but the facts that do exist are sufficient to establish Shakespeare's identity as a man and his authorship of the thirty-seven plays that reputable critics acknowledge to be his.

Shakespearean Tragedy

Nature and Definition: Tragedy is a very difficult concept to define. Despite what modern critics have labored on the subject, Aristotle's definition of tragedy in his Poetics, still remains the best and comprehensive with some minor difference in the 21st century. Tragedy is a representation of an action which is serious, complete in itself, and of a certain magnitude; it is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted, not narrated and by exciting pity and fear gives a healthy relief to such emotions.

However, A.C. Bradley most perceptively comments the Shakespearean Tragedy: A tale of suffering and calamity conducing to death. Although this remark captures what is common to Shakespearean Tragedies. It must be noted that ever Shakespearean Tragedy in unique in its way. There are very few observations which one may make about one of them which are applicable to others.

The Tragic Hero: Shakespeare's tragedies are built of a single man who towers above the other characters. So Shakespeare's major tragedies such as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth are all tragedies of character. The central character, for the most part, may be regarded as a double entity. Shakespeare's tragic heroes have many qualities in common. One of the qualities are their intense concern for someone, some thing or some aspect of life. In the case of Othello, we find the character to be deeply concerned about Desdemona. It is doubtful whether Shakespeare knew Poetics; all his heroes except the possible exception of Macbeth are good. His tragic heroes are of an extremely sensitive and poetic nature. Hamlet being the most intellectual and Othello being the most poetic and romantic of them. They also belong to the higher order of society. The lowest in rank is Othello who is at least general whose progeny may be traced to kings. Still he is no common man. In every one of Shakespeare's tragedies, the hero is either faced with making a moral choice of grave consequences or initiating some action which has far-reaching consequences.

The Tragic Flaw: Shakespeare's tragedy is above all a tragedy of character, though environment, coincidences and chance play their parts. However, it is some flaw in the tragic hero which causes his tragedy. The example being Othello whose tragic flaw is jealousy. The tragic flaw is not always a shortcoming in itself. It is only in the particular situation in which the hero is placed that the particular quality of the hero becomes damaging to him. For example, Hamlet's habit of carefully weighing the pros and cons of everything before taking action would have proved an asset to Othello, while precipitateness of action would have cut-short Hamlet's agonies.

The Role of Chance and Fate: Chance and fate, the latter sometimes in the form of supernatural, also play their part in Shakespearean tragedies. However, they are never the starting point of tragedies, but are led into when the story has taken a definite course. The incident of handkerchief in Othello is an example of pure chance which is exploited by the villain, but this chance crops up when the seeds of jealousy in Othello's mind have become strong trees

Theme and Action: Shakespearean tragedies have well-defined themes which are also capable of being expressed in moral terms. For example, the theme of King Lear is regeneration while that of Othello is one of making a choice. His stories involve themes such as murder, madness, duels etc. Shakespeare doesn't conform to the classical view of tragedy which insisted on the purity of genres and the unities of time and space. For Shakespeare, the prime unity is the tragic effect created by a strong sense of inevitability.

Characterization: Shakespearean tragic hero is the only and the one in the play; however, there is at least one character near him which is also highlighted. In his tragedies, male characters have a dominant role and female characters, although unforgettable, usually play little action. Shakespeare also uses double plots and comic scenes for comic relief.

Tragic Effect: Even without knowing the Poetics, Shakespeare is able to arouse strong pity and fear in the minds of his readers and theatre viewers. In Shakespearean tragedies, only these emotions are not aroused; but according to A.C. Bradley, the characteristic emotion aroused by Shakespeare's tragedies is a profound sense of waste. This is derived from the idea of human worth and dignity which the plays express and the missed opportunities or wrong choices which lead to man's defeat without affecting his essential dignity. Shakespearean tragedies embody a sense of profound suffering and sadness and some of them end in a number of deaths which enhance Shakespeare's intended tragic effect. For example, Hamlet and King Lear end in so many deaths that the stage is littered with dead bodies in the last scene.

Passion versus Reason: The predominantly tragic conflict in the minds of Shakespearean heroes is between passion and conflict. The opposition between reason and passion, first isolated – through Othello and Iago - in a dramatic conflict of personalities and then projected in Macbeth and Lear, beyond the original hero to the state and universe which surround him in an eternal fight between good and evil.

Shakespeare's Personal Views: Many books have been written on subjects such as 'Shakespeare's Religion', but there's nothing definitely coming from his own plays. On the whole, Shakespeare is the most impersonal writer. That's perhaps what makes him the greatest writer in the world. Shakespeare was greatly religious and compassionate; but we don't know his brand of Christianity. It is, however, very difficult to get insight into Shakespeare.

Othello : Background

The plot of Shakespeare's Othello is largely taken from Giraldi Cinthio's Gli Hecatommithi, a tale of love, jealousy, and betrayal; however, the characters, themes, and attitudes of the works are vastly different, with Shakespeare's play being a more involved study of human nature and psychology. There are, however, a few deviations from Shakespeare's source, one of which being the motivations of the Iago figure. Cithio's Iago was driven to revenge when Desdemona refused to have an affair with him; Iago's motivations are not nearly so plain in Shakespeare's version.

Othello also touches upon a major issue in Europe of this time period; the intermingling of Muslim religion and culture with the West. Written just a century after the Muslims were driven out of Spain as a part of the Reconquista, there are obvious threads of hostility within the play about Othello's Moorish origins, and his differences in religion and culture. The hostility between the West and the East is also shown in the conflict between Venice and the Turks; the Christian Venetians want to protect Christendom from the influence of the Muslim Turks, and ironically, Moorish Othello is the one sent to complete this mission.

Othello is considered to be a prime example of Aristotelian drama; it focuses upon a very small cast of characters, one of the smallest used in Shakespeare, has few distractions from the main plot arc, and concentrates on just a few themes, like jealousy. AS such, it is one of the most intense and focused plays Shakespeare wrote, and has also enjoyed a great amount of popularity from the Jacobean period to the present day.

The character of Iago is a variation on the Vice figure found in earlier morality plays; he deviates from this model because of his lack of a clear motivation, and because of his portrayal as a very malignant figure. However, Iago is less of a character than a changeable device for the plot, and in this sense, he is a clear descendant of the omnipresent "vice" figure. Iago's great cunning, manipulative abilities, and almost supernatural perception mean that he is a very formidable foe, and this makes Othello's fall seem even more inevitable and tragic.

One reason for the overwhelming popularity of the play throughout the ages is that it focuses on two people who defied society in order to follow their own hearts. Shakespeare scholar Walter Cohen cites the popularity of Othello during times of great rebellion and upheaval; the play was most popular during the European wars of the mid-19th century, the fall of Czarist Russia, and also during World War II in America. These productions tended to emphasize the nobility and love of Othello and Desdemona, and made their fall seem more tragic and ill-deserved.

Othello : Summary

Act I:

Othello begins in the city of Venice, at night; Roderigo is having a discussion with Iago, who is bitter as being passed up as Othello's lieutenant in favor of the Venetian gentleman Cassio. Iago says that he only serves Othello to further himself; he is playing false, and admits that his nature is not at all what it seems. Iago is aware that Desdemona, the daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian nobleman of some stature, has run off with Othello, the black warrior of the Moors. Brabantio and many others know nothing of this coupling; Iago decides to enlist Roderigo, who lusts after Desdemona, and awaken Brabantio with screams that his daughter is gone.

Roderigo is the one speaking most to Brabantio, but Iago is there too, hidden, yelling unsavory things about Othello and his intentions toward Desdemona. Brabantio panics, and calls for people to try and find his daughter; Iago leaves, not wanting anyone to find out that he betrayed his own leader, and Brabantio begins to search for her.

Iago joins Othello, and tells him about Roderigo's betrayal of the news of his marriage to Brabantio. Cassio comes at last, as do Roderigo and Brabantio; Brabantio is very angry, swearing that Othello must have bewitched his daughter, and that the state will not decide for him in this case. Othello says that the Duke must hear him, and decide in his favor, or else all is far from right in Venice.

Brabantio and Othello address the assembled Venetian leaders, who are discussing this military matter, and Brabantio announces his grievance against Othello for marrying his daughter. Othello addresses the company, admitting that he did marry Desdemona, but wooed her with stories, and did her no wrongs. Desdemona comes to speak, and she confirms Othello's words; Brabantio's grievance is denied, and Desdemona will indeed stay with Othello. However, Othello is called away to Cyprus, to help with the conflict there. Othello and Desdemona win their appeal to remain together, and Desdemona is to stay with Iago, until she can come to Cyprus and meet Othello there.

Roderigo is upset that Desdemona and Othello's union was allowed to stand, since he lusts after Desdemona. But Iago assures him that the match will not last long, and at any time, Desdemona could come rushing to him. Iago wants to break up the couple, using Roderigo as his pawn, out of malice and his wicked ability to do so.

Act II:

A terrible storm has struck Cyprus, just as the Turks were about to approach; this bodes badly for Othello's ship. A messenger enters, and confirms that the Turkish fleet was broken apart by the storm, and that Cassio has arrived, though Othello is still at sea. They spot a ship coming forth; Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia are on it. Somehow, Iago and Desdemona enter into an argument about what women are, and Iago shows how little praise he believes women deserve. Othello arrives at last, and is very glad to see his wife arrived, much earlier than expected. Iago speaks to Roderigo, convincing him that Desdemona will stray from Othello, as she has already done with Cassio. He convinces Roderigo to attack Cassio that night, as he plans to visit mischief on both Othello and Cassio.

Iago and Cassio are on the watch together; Iago gets Cassio to drink a bit, knowing that he cannot hold his liquor at all. Iago also tries to make Desdemona seem tempting to Cassio; but Cassio's intentions are innocent and friendly, so this approach fails. Iago says that he intends to get Cassio drunk, which will hopefully cause a quarrel between Cassio and Roderigo, who has been stirred up against Cassio. Iago wants to see Cassio discredited through this, so that he might take Cassio's place. Montano and others come, and Iago entertains them with small talk and song. Cassio fights offstage with Roderigo, and comes forth, chasing him; Montano tries to hinder Cassio, but Cassio just ends up injuring him. All the noise wakes Othello, who comes down to figure out what has happened. Montano tells what he knows of it all, and Iago fills in the rest making sure to fictionalize his part in it all too.

Cassio laments that he has lost his reputation along with his rank, which is very dear to him. Iago tries to convince him that a reputation means little; and, if he talks to Desdemona, maybe he can get her to vouch for him with Othello. Iago then gives a soliloquy about knowing that Desdemona will speak for Cassio, and that he will be able to turn that against them both.

Act III:

Iago enters, and Cassio tells him that he means to speak to Desdemona, so that she may clear things up with Othello. Emilia comes out, and bids Cassio to come in and speak with Desdemona about his tarnished reputation. Desdemona believes Cassio is a good person, and has been wronged in this case; she pledges to do everything she can to persuade her husband to take Cassio back. Cassio leaves just as Othello enters because he does not wish for a confrontation. Iago seizes on this opportunity to play on Othello's insecurities, and make Cassio's exit seem guilty and incriminating. Desdemona expresses her concern for Cassio; she is persistent in his suit, which Othello is not too pleased about.

Iago then gets Othello to believe, through insinuation, that there is something going on between Desdemona and Cassio. Othello seizes on this, and then Iago works at building up his suspicions. Soon, Othello begins to doubt his wife, as Iago lets his insinuations gain the force of an accusation against her. Desdemona enters, and they have a brief conversation; Othello admits that he is troubled, though he will not state the cause.

Desdemona drops the handkerchief that Othello gave her on their honeymoon; Emilia knew that her husband had wanted it for something, so she doesn't feel too guilty about taking it. Emilia gives it to Iago, who decides to use the handkerchief for his own devices. Othello re-enters, and tells Iago that he now doubts his wife; Othello demands "ocular proof" of Desdemona's dishonesty, so Iago sets about making stories up about Cassio talking in his sleep, and says that Cassio has the handkerchief that Othello gave to Desdemona. Iago knows how important this handkerchief is to Othello; it was his first gift to Desdemona, and was given to him by his mother. Othello is incensed to hear that Desdemona would give away something so valuable, and is persuaded by Iago's insinuations and claims to believe that Desdemona is guilty. Othello then swears to have Cassio dead, and to be revenged upon Desdemona for the non-existent affair.

Desdemona is looking everywhere for the handkerchief, very sorry to have lost it. Othello enters, and asks for Desdemona's handkerchief; she admits that she does not have it, and then Othello tells her of its significance and alleged magical powers. Desdemona interrupts Othello's inquiry by bringing up Cassio's attempt to get back into Othello's favor; Othello becomes angry, and storms out. Desdemona and Emilia both note that Othello is much changed; he is unkind and seems jealous, and they are suspicious of the change in him.

Cassio then enters, with Iago; he laments that his suit is not successful, and that Othello does not seem likely to take him back. Desdemona tells Cassio and Iago that Othello has

been acting strange, and is upset, and Iago goes to look for him, feigning concern. Emilia thinks that Othello's change has something to do with Desdemona, or Othello's jealous nature; they still cannot fathom what has happened, and exit, leaving Cassio. Bianca comes in, and Cassio asks her to copy the handkerchief that he found in his room; it is Desdemona's handkerchief, though Cassio has no idea. He claims he does not love her, and gets angry at her for allegedly suspecting that the handkerchief is a gift of another woman. But, Bianca is not disturbed, and leaves with the handkerchief.

Act IV:

Othello is trying, even after swearing that Desdemona was unfaithful, not to condemn her too harshly. He is talking with Iago about the handkerchief still, and its significance in being found; but, soon, Iago whips Othello into an even greater fury through mere insinuation, and Othello takes the bait. Othello falls into a trance of rage, and Iago decides to hammer home his false ideas about his wife. Iago calls Cassio in, while Othello hides; Iago speaks to Cassio of Bianca, but Othello, in his disturbed state, believes that Cassio is talking of Desdemona, which is the last "proof" he needs before declaring his wife guilty.

Now, Othello is resolved to kill Desdemona himself, and charges Iago with murdering Cassio. Lodovico, a noble Venetian whom Desdemona knows, has recently landed; Desdemona and Othello welcome him there. But, when Desdemona mentions Cassio, Othello becomes very angry and slaps her in front of everyone; she rushes off, very upset. Ludovico especially is shocked at this change in Othello, and has no idea how such a noble man could act so cruelly.

Othello questions Emilia about Desdemona's guilt, or the chance she has had an affair with Cassio. Emilia swears that she has seen and heard all that has gone on between Cassio and Desdemona, and that Desdemona is pure and true. Othello believes that Emilia is in on all this too; he accuses Desdemona, and her insistence that she is innocent only infuriates him further. Emilia thinks that someone has manipulated Othello into accusing Desdemona, and has poisoned his mind; however, Iago is there to dispel this opinion. Upon leaving the women, Iago comes across Roderigo; he is not pleased with how Iago has failed to deliver on his promises regarding Desdemona. Iago quiets him by making him believe that if he kills Cassio, then he will win Desdemona; Roderigo decides to go along with it, but Iago is coming dangerously close to being revealed.

Othello tells Desdemona to go to bed, and dismiss Emilia; Emilia regrets Desdemona's marriage, although Desdemona cannot say that she does not love Othello. Desdemona knows that she will die soon; she sings a song of sadness and resignation, and decides to give herself to her fate. Desdemona asks Emilia whether she would commit adultery to win her husband the world. Emilia, the more practical one, thinks that it is not too big a price for a small act; Desdemona is too good, and too devout, to say that she would do so.

Act V:

Iago has Roderigo poised and ready to pounce on Cassio, and kill him; if either of them is killed, it is to Iago's benefit, so that his devices might not be discovered. Roderigo and Cassio fight, and both are injured badly. Iago enters, pretending that he knows nothing of the scuffle; Gratiano and Lodovico also stumble upon the scene, having no idea what has happened. Roderigo is still alive, so Iago feigns a quarrel, and finishes him off. Bianca comes by, and sees Cassio wounded; Iago makes some remark to implicate her; Cassio is carried away, and Roderigo is already dead.

Othello enters Desdemona's room while she is asleep; and though she is beautiful, and appears innocent, he still is determined to kill her. Desdemona awakens, believes there is nothing she can do to stop him from killing her, and continues to assert her innocence.

Othello tells her that he found her handkerchief with Cassio, though Desdemona insists it must not be true; she pleads with Othello not to kill her right then, but he begins to smother her. Emilia knocks, curious about what is going on; Othello lets her in, but tries to conceal Desdemona, who he thinks is already dead. Emilia brings the news of Roderigo's death, and Cassio's wounding.

Emilia soon finds out that Desdemona is nearly dead, by Othello's hand; Desdemona speaks her last words, and then Emilia pounces on Othello for committing this horrible crime. Othello is not convinced of his folly until Iago confesses his part, and Cassio speaks of the use of the handkerchief; then, Othello is overcome with grief. Iago stabs Emilia for telling all about his plots, and then Emilia dies; the Venetian nobles reveal that Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is dead, and so cannot be grieved by this tragedy now. Othello stabs Iago when he is brought back in; Othello then tells all present to remember him how he is, and kills himself. Cassio becomes temporary leader of the troops at Cyprus, and Lodovico and Gratiano are supposed to carry the news of the tragedy back to Venice.

Battle of Good vs. Evil in Othello

Shakespeare presented the classic battle between the deceitful forces of evil and the innocence of good in Othello. The forces of evil ultimately lead to the breakdown of Othello, a noble Venetian moor, well-known by the people of Venice as an honourable soldier and a worthy leader. His breakdown results in the murder of his wife Desdemona who is representative of the good in nature.

The evil contained within the play is represented by the character of Iago who is cunning, untrustworthy, selfish, and plotting. He uses these traits to his advantage by slowly planning his own triumph while watching the demise of others. It is not only his own nature of evil that he succeeds but also the weaknesses of the other characters. He uses the weaknesses of Othello, specifically jealousy and his devotion to things as they seem, to conquer his opposite in Desdemona. From the start of the play, Iago's scheming ability is shown when he convinces Roderigo to tell about Othello and Desdemona’s elopement to Desdemona's father, Brabantio. Confidentially Iago continues his plot successfully, making fools of others, and himself being rewarded. Except Roderigo, no one is aware of Iago's plans. This is because Iago pretends to be an honest man loyal to his superiors.

The fact that Othello himself views Iago as trustworthy and honest gives the evil within Iago a perfect unsuspecting victim for his schemes. The opportunity to get to Desdemona through Othello is one temptation that Iago cannot refuse. He creates the impression that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio in order to stir the jealousy within Othello. It is this jealousy and the ignorance of Othello that lead to the downfall of Desdemona; the one truly good natured character in the play.

Iago has been appointed the position of servant to Othello instead of the more prestigious position of lieutenant. Michael Cassio has been appointed this position. Iago feels betrayed because he considers himself more qualified than Cassio to serve as lieutenant. Iago then foreshadows his plans for Othello to Roderigo,

> **“O, sir, content you;**
> **I follow him to serve my turn upon him"**

Iago already realizes that Othello thinks about him as an honest man. Roderigo is used by Iago as an apprentice and someone to do his “dirty” work. Roderigo is naively unsuspecting. As the play shifts from Venice to Cyprus there is an interesting contrast. Venice, a respectful and honourable town is overshadowed by the war torn villages of Cyprus. It could be said that Venice represents good or specifically Desdemona and that Cyprus represents evil in Iago. Desdemona has been taken from her peacefulness and brought onto the grounds of evil. Iago commits his largest acts of deceit in Cyprus,

fittingly considering the atmosphere. Ironically, the Venetians feel the Turks are their only enemy while in fact Iago is in hindsight the one man who destroys their stable state. Act II Scene III shows Iago's willing ability to manipulate characters in the play. Iago convinces Montano to inform Othello of Cassio's weakness for alcohol hoping this would rouse dissatisfaction by Othello. Iago when forced to tell the truth against another character does so very suspiciously. He pretends not to offend Cassio when telling Othello of the fight Cassio was involved in, but Iago secretly wants the worst to become of Cassio's situation without seeming responsible. Cassio is relieved of his duty as lieutenant. With Cassio no longer in the position of lieutenant, this gives Iago the opportunity to more effectively interact with and manipulate Othello. By controlling Othello, Iago would essentially control Desdemona.

To reach Desdemona directly is unforeseeable for Iago considering that Othello is superior to him. It is for this reason that Iago decides to exploit Othello. If Iago can turn Othello against his own wife he will have defeated his opposition. Act III Scene III, is very important because it is the point in the play where Iago begins to establish his manipulation of Othello. Cassio feels that it is necessary to seek the help of Desdemona in order to regain his position of lieutenant and therefore meets with her to discuss this possibility. Iago and Othello enter the scene just after Cassio leaves, and Iago wistfully tries to make it look like Cassio left because he does not want to be seen in the courtship of Desdemona. Iago sarcastically remarks:

> **"Cassio, my lord! No, sure, I cannot think it**
> **That he would steal away so guilty-like,**
> **Seeing your coming."**

When Desdemona leaves, Iago takes the opportunity to strengthen Othello's views of honesty and trust towards him by saying ironically,

> **"Men should be what they seem;**
> **Or those that be not, would they might seem none!"**

This cleverness by Iago works upon one of the **tragic flaws** of Othello. **Othello has a tendency to take everything he sees and everything he is told at face value without questioning the circumstances.** Iago wonders why someone would pretend to be something they are not, while in fact that is the exact thing he represents. Finally, after hearing the exploits of Iago and witnessing the events surrounding Cassio, Othello for the first time is in conflict about what is the truth. This is the first stage of Iago's scheme to control Othello. As Emilia becomes suspicious about Othello's development of jealousy, Desdemona defends her husband by blaming herself for any harm done. This once again shows Desdemona's compassion and willingness to sacrifice herself for her husband. Othello begins to show his difficulty in maintaining his composure:

> **"Well, my good lady.**
> **[Aside] O, hardness to dissemble --**
> **How do you, Desdemona?**

Act IV, Scene I is a continuation of the anxiety and indifference Othello is undergoing. Iago takes advantage of this by being blunt with Othello about his wife Desdemona. Iago suggests that she is having sexual relations with other men, possibly Cassio, and continues on as if nothing has happened. This suggestion put Othello into a state of such emotional turmoil that he is lost in a trance. Iago's control over Othello is so strong now that he convinces him to consider getting rid of Desdemona and even suggests methods of killing her. Iago, so proud of his accomplishments of underhandedness:

> **"Work on.**
> **My medicine work! Thus credulous fools are caught;**
> **And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,**
> **All guiltless, meet reproach."**

As a result of Desdemona's mention of Cassio, Othello commits his first act of violence against Desdemona by hitting her. This shows now Othello's other tragic flaw. He made himself susceptible to Iago and the jealousy within him begins to lead to the demise of others. By his actions Othello has isolated himself from everyone except Iago. This gives Iago the perfect opportunity to complete his course of action. Iago does not tolerate any interference in his plans, and he first murders Roderigo before he can dispel the evil that Iago represents. Finally, Othello is so full of the lies told to him by Iago that he murders his wife. Desdemona, representative of goodness and heaven as a whole blames her death on herself and not Othello. Iago's wife, Emilia, becomes the ultimate undoing of Iago. After revealing Iago's plot to Othello, Iago kills her. This is yet another vicious act to show the true evil Iago represents. Othello finally realizes after being fooled into murder:

> **"I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable**
> **If that thou best a devil, I cannot kill thee."**

Iago says: **"I bleed, sir, but not killed,"**

This is the final statement by Iago himself that truly shows his belief in evil and that he truly thinks he is the devil. That is the destruction of all that is good. Hell over heaven and black over white.

Iago has one major motivational factor that leads him to lie, cheat, and commit crimes on other characters. This motivation is the destruction of all that is good and the rise of evil. This contrast is represented between Iago and Desdemona. Desdemona is described frequently by other characters as "she is divine, the grace of heaven", while Iago in contrast is described as hellish after his plot is uncovered. Iago uses the other characters in the play to work specifically towards his goal. In this way, he can maintain his supposed unknowingness about the events going on and still work his scheming ways. Iago's schemes however at times seem to work unrealistically well which may or may not be a case of witchcraft or magic. Iago's major mistake, ironically, is that he trusted his wife Emilia and found that she was not as trustworthy as he thought. Although not completely victorious at the conclusion of the play, Iago does successfully eliminate the one character representative of heaven, innocence, and honesty. Finally, everything Iago pretended to be led to his demise: Honesty, Innocence, and Love.

Othello as a Tragedy of evil : Evil in Iago

In Othello, **evil** it is **personified** in one character who wears the mask of seeming virtue. In the character of Iago, we see evil as deception and as a direct challenge to the order and harmony of the universe. Iago's superficial brilliance and self-control is the 'reason' for renaissance skepticism which in Shakespeare's day was challenging the great vision of harmony and order.

Despite his hypocrisy, **Iago** reveals himself to the reader as an **active force of evil** right from the first scene of the play. It is Roderigo alone who is given the insight into Iago; but he is foolish and doesn't understand the implications of Iago's plans. Iago stands for **social disintegration**. He is not one of the servants who get paid by their masters for their service and are loyal to them. He is the wicked one whose loyalty is a mask.

The supreme **egotism of Iago** is a manifestation of the code of 'reason' by which he lives. True human reason in terms of Renaissance Christian humanism was a reflection of the supreme wisdom of God and it consisted in submitting one's will to the purposes of Go. **Iago's reason is the sin of pride**, for it **denies the supremacy** of God and sees man as the sole author of his destiny, able to control himself and others by the power of his mind. It is expressed in his speech to Roderigo which begins the words **"Virtue! A fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus."** In denying the purposes of the power of God, Iago strikes at the very roots of Christian Humanism. He has a lust

for the blood and a permission of the will. He is conceited and excessively proud of his intelligence and wisdom which ultimately cause the fall of his personality.

Iago's **betrayal** of **himself** is quite expected and possible despite Bradley's wonder that how his supreme intellect should finally betray him into such colossal errors as his misjudging the relationship between Othello and Desdemona and the character of his own wife, Emilia. But it is in the very nature of Iago's intellect that he should be so. He sees that Desdemona's love for the Moor was only animal lust and nothing else. He can perceive only the outward appearance of Othello; he can't see the qualities for which Desdemona married him; and thus their relationship seems only a product of lust which lust must destroy. Out of Iago's failure of perception will come his own destruction, but his failure is inherent in the very 'reason' by which he lives.

The **audience** doesn't have the same **views about Iago** as the other characters in the play do. The audience knows him to be a Semi-devil, the very incarnation of Devil and the negation of moral values. To the audience, he is devil; but to Othello, he is 'Honest Iago.' Honest is very much like that of Claudius in Hamlet. He stands for false appearance and it is fitting that Shakespeare should give the celebrated lines:

> **Who steals my purse steals trash**
> **But he that filches from me my good name**
> **Robs me of that which not enriches him**
> **And makes me poor indeed.**

Such a concern for reputation is a manifestation of pride

Iago personifies evil in the guise of good whereas in **Othello** himself, we have **a depiction of true virtue** which seems to be wearing many of the signs of evil. As in Cinthio's story, Othello's wedding with Desdemona was unnatural. Cinthio doesn't mention the blackness of the Moor, mentioning it only once in the story. In the Renaissance, the color black was a symbol of lechery. It was so commonly used in the books that it was also the color of the devil whose redness is a fairly recent innovation. To Shakespeare's audience, Othello would have all the outward appearance of the blacker devil which Amelia calls him. His marriage to Desdemona would appear as aberration in nature. Iago awakens Brabantio with a description of the marriage in these terms, punctuated by images of brute sexuality - comparing Othello to a black ram that is going to take advantage of Brabantio's white ewe.

Finally, the **unnaturalness** and **Appearance** plays a vital role in the paly. The first two acts of the play these themes, the evil of the unnatural marriage and that of Iago's mask of seeming virtue. Othello has the blackness of Satan, Iago the whiteness of truth and virtue. True virtue bears the mark of evil and evil is marked with the semblance of honesty. Shakespeare assures the audience that of the falsity of these outward sign, that Iago is seemingly honest and that Othello, despite his appearance, is a man of true nobility whom Desdemona can love for his 'honours and his valiant parts'. We see his dignity before the consul where he denies the very lechery which his outward color represents. Shakespeare's deliberate reversal of normal appearance is so shocking that the audience must be left till incredulous, with an uncertain fear that appearance be still be truth. This fear is supported by Brabantio's warning:

> **Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see**
> **She has deceived her father, and may thee**

Upon this seeming violation of nature, Iago will work his temptation of Othello and under Iago's influence; Othello will see Desdemona exactly Brabantio has seen her. So we can conclude that the play is filled with the combat between good and evil and the heinous acts of evil to dominate the good are exposed beautifully by master dramatist William Shakespeare.

Othello: Shakespeare's Aristotelian Tragedy

Aristotle described a tragedy as "an imitation of an action of high importance, complete and of some amplitude: in language enhanced by distinct and varying beauties…by means of pity and fear effecting its purgation of these emotions". William Shakespeare's famous play Othello is concerns the downfall of a Moorish general having the elements of jealousy, suspense, intrigue, murder, and suicide to create a magnificent tragedy of the highest Aristotelian order. Aristotle prescribed three main ingredients for a tragic drama recipe: **hamartia**, or a **tragic flaw** in the **tragic hero's character** that brings about his downfall; **catharsis**, or a **purgation** of the audience's emotions so that they feel that they have learned something from the play; and anagnorisis, or the character's revelation of some fact not previously realized.

Shakespeare's protagonist Othello fulfills all of Aristotle's requirements for **a tragic hero**, as Othello is a character of noble status who falls from that position of power to one of shame because of his hamartia. Moreover the **plot** of Othello contains a powerful **catharsis** through its **climax** and conclusion, and an anagnorisis when Othello realizes that Iago and Desdemona are not who they seemed to be.

First of all, the Moorish general Othello, fits Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero. Aristotle states that a tragic hero must have three dominant qualities: he must be a **person of high estate**, he must **fall from that position into unhappiness**, and his downfall must be **brought about by his hamartia**, or his **tragic flaw** . Othello is not only a successful general in the Venetian army but is also well respected, admired, and well liked. Since Othello enjoys a position of power and happiness at the beginning of the play, this status makes his **downfall** from beloved general to despised murderer infinitely more tragic and moving.

According to Aristotle, however, the tragic hero's collapse cannot be a simple deterioration from success to misery. The most distinctive feature of the Aristotelian tragic hero is **hamartia**; his downfall must be brought about by a character flaw or flaw in judgment that leads to his destruction. Hamartia is more than a moral weakness; it is a crucial mistake on the part of the tragic hero that causes him to plunge from greatness to grief. Othello's mistake as a tragic hero is that he **believes Iago's treacherous lies about Desdemona's unfaithfulness**. Instead of investigating the matter further, he rashly jumps to the worst conclusions about his wife and believes every lie that Iago whispers into his ear.

Iago recognizes that he can use these weaknesses of Othello's to hasten his downfall. Therefore Othello fits Aristotle's description of a tragic hero who has descended from high estate to destruction because of his **hamartia**.

A true Aristotelian tragedy also contains what the Greeks called a **catharsis**, or a **purgation** that leaves the audience feeling justified and uplifted. In a tragedy like Othello, where almost all of the characters wind up dead, the audience is certainly not expected to feel happy or cheerful about the play's conclusion, but they do feel a sort of justification at the lessons learned by the play's characters and satisfaction in the villain's punishment. Aristotle said, "The tragic pleasure is that of pity and fear, and the poet has to produce it by a work of imitation". The drama must arouse feelings of pity and fear in the audience and then expunge those feelings through a satisfactory conclusion. In Othello, Shakespeare certainly moves the audience to feel pity for Othello, for Desdemona, for Cassio, and even for Iago. They also fear for the fate of the happy couple, and realize their worst fears when Othello smothers his innocent wife in a jealous rage. Once more the audience pities Othello when he recognizes afterwards that Desdemona is innocent and stabs himself in remorse. Even though the play does not end "happily ever after," the deaths of the unhappy couple and the punishment of the villain Iago bring a sort of closure to the drama.

The **ultimate purpose of catharsis in a tragedy** is to purify our feelings, refining them into something more ennobling. The audience certainly feels as though they have

learned something important and witnessed an epic drama that has affected them morally and spiritually. This is the purpose of tragedy – to dramatize the weaknesses, despair, and failings of the human spirit and to demonstrate how to better ourselves through this experience. Through this emotionally charged plot filled with intrigue and conflict, Shakespeare has certainly met all of Aristotle's requirements for catharsis.

The **last element of Aristotelian tragedy** found in Shakespeare's Othello is **anagnorisis**, a fact that was previously unknown to the tragic hero. Aristotle's literal Greek definition of **anagnorisis consists of two parts**; "The first part of the definition characterizes **recognition as a change from ignorance into knowledge, leading either to friendship or enmity**". Shakespeare brings out this particular feature of anagnorisis towards the end of the play when Othello realizes that his **trusted friend Iago has trapped him in a web of lies and has deceived him into thinking Desdemona is unfaithful**. Iago's wife Emilia cries out before she dies,

> **"Moor, she was chaste. She loved thee, cruel Moor.**
> **So come my soul to bliss as I speak true" (5.2.258-259)**

and suddenly Othello understands that it is Iago who has misled him, not Desdemona. This anagnorisis causes Othello to cry,

> **"Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!**
> **O Desdemona! Dead, Desdemona! Dead! O! O!" (5.2.289-290),**

to stab and wound the villain Iago, and then to kill himself in remorse.

The **second aspect of the Greek word anagnorisis** is its more superficial, general connotation. Anagnorisis usually involves revelation of the true identity of persons previously unknown, as when a father recognizes a stranger as his son, or vice versa". It is the simple epiphany experienced by the tragic hero as he realizes something significant, like the fact that he has killed the woman he loves for no reason.

This **moment of revelation** for Othello is the **climax** of Shakespeare's play as everything comes together before the tragic hero's eyes and the full extent of Iago's treachery and deceit is made clear to him. For the audience, the moment is especially climactic, because we have known the truth all along. In the tragedy of Othello, we witness an imitation of an action. The audience knows that Desdemona is innocent; thus, Othello's baseless accusations and crime against her arouse special pity and loathing. This makes the Othello's anagnorisis at the end of the play exceptionally touching.

Shakespeare's great play depicting the downfall of a Moorish general through jealousy and deceit is such a tragic drama. Aristotle's influence upon the sixteenth-century English playwright is evident in Othello. Through the character of Othello as a tragic hero with a fatal flaw, the purgation of emotion through the couple's deaths and the punishment of Iago, and the epiphany Othello experiences at the end of the play, Shakespeare demonstrates with eloquence each and every one of Aristotle's qualifications for tragedy. Othello is a tragic drama of epic proportions that has stood the test of time and continues to move audiences with its powerful themes of jealousy, intrigue, betrayal, faithfulness, death, and remorse.

Othello as a Tragic Hero

In Shakespeare's Othello, Othello can be considered a tragic hero because he follows Aristotle's six elements of a tragedy. Based on Aristotle's six elements of a tragedy, position, flaw, prophecy, recognition, catastrophe, and reversal, the character of Othello from Shakespeare's Othello can be considered a tragic hero.

The first element of tragedy is **position**, or status, that the hero is in. In Othello, Othello is the leader of the Italian army and is very important to the people of Italy. "Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you against the general enemy Ottoman." This quote

shows how important Othello is to the army and to the war. When Othello is chosen to lead the army overseas, he also makes Brabantio mad by marrying his daughter, Desdemona, without his permission.

"And, noble signior, if virtue no delighted beauty lack, your son- in-law is far more far than black (17)."

This quote shows that Othello is so respected that the Duke of Venice can see through the color of Othello's skin and gives him praise.

The second element of tragedy is **prophecy**, which can be seen when Othello is telling Desdemona the story about when he received the handkerchief.

"She told me her, while she kept it't would make her amiable and subdue my father entirely to her love, but if she lost it or made a gift of it, my father's eye should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt after new fancies (56)."

This quote lets the reader know that the handkerchief is not only important to Othello and Desdemona but it is also important to the play because it's the reason why Othello gets jealous. This prophecy leads to the downfall of the tragic hero. Another incident where prophecy occurred in the play was when Desdemona tells the story of Barbara, Desdemona's mother's maid, who sang a song of "willow". "An old thing 't was, but it express'd her fortune, and she died singing it: that song to-night will not go from my mind (75)." This quote is an example of prophecy because it's foreshadowing that Desdemona will die because she won't let the song go from her mind.

The third element of a tragedy is **flaw**. Flaw can be either hubris or anger. "By heaven, that should be my handkerchief (64)!" This quote shows the jealousy that Othello has over the fact that Desdemona is being unfaithful to him. In Oedipus the king anger can be seen when Tiresias tells Oedipus that he is the evil that haunts the town. "Good riddance too! You're nothing but a nuisance here, and one I can do without." This is an example of how powerful anger can be because of the anger that Othello feels, he can't even stand to look at the woman that he loves. Once Othello finds out that Desdemona is being unfaithful to him, he approaches her looking for an explanation. "O devil, devil! If that the earth could teem with woman's tears, each drop she falls would prove a crocodile. Out of my sight (67)!" This quote shows how Othello's jealousy has turned into rage, a form of anger.

The fourth element of a tragedy is **recognition**, which can be seen when Emilia hears Othello mentions the handkerchief, after he killed Desdemona. " with that recognizance and pledge of love which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand: It was a handkerchief, an antique token my father gave my mother (87)." Once Othello says this, Emilia knows that Iago is the person who set up Desdemona and Othello isn't the one to blame. Recognition can also be seen in Oedipus the King after the shepherd tells the story of the baby. "For if you are the one he says you are, make no mistake: you are a doom-born man (Sophocles 67)." At this point in the play, Oedipus knows that he is the one who is causing the problems in Thebes because the Tiresias was right.

The fifth element of a tragedy is **catastrophe**, which can be seen when Othello dies. "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this, killing myself, to die upon a kiss (91)." This is the last thing that Othello says before he dies which is the catastrophe in the play. Oedipus' catastrophe happens when Jocasta kills herself after she finds out that the prophet of Oedipus was true. "He frees the noose and lays the wretched woman down, then rips from off her dress the golden brooches she was wearing (Sophocles 70)." This quote shows the severity of the fact that Jocasta kills herself because it leads right into reversal.

The sixth element of a tragedy is **reversal** which can be seen when Desdemona kills herself. "Whip me, ye devils, from the possession of this heavenly sight! Blow me about

in the winds! Roast me in sulphur! Wash me down in steep-down gulfs of fire! O Desdemona! Desdemona! Dead! Oh! Oh! Oh (88)!" This quote shows the pain that Othello felt when everything turned bad. In Oedipus the King, Oedipus went through the same kind of pain when he went through reversal. "Aah! A nightmare mist has fallen adamantine black on me-abomination closing. Cry, cry, oh cry again (Sophocles 72)!" Oedipus and Othello are in so much pain and suffering that they both inflict sever wounds upon themselves. When Othello finds out that Desdemona was being faithful to him, he asks for forgiveness. "I do believe it, and I ask your pardon. Will you, I pray, demi-devil why he hath thus enslaved my soul and body (90)? This quote shows that Othello is in so much pain that he feels enslaved in his own body.

Othello can be seen as a tragic hero because he follows all of Aristotle's six elements of tragic hero. These are the same six elements that define Oedipus as a tragic hero. The six elements of a tragedy can be seen throughout the plays Othello and Oedipus the King. That is why Othello is seen as a tragic hero through the eyes of the reader.

Othello's Hamartia

A Shakespearean tragedy is one that encompasses many different elements. Shakespeare presents all of these elements spectacularly in Othello. For a tragedy to occur there are five conditions. The protagonist, Othello in this case, must experience a death or a total loss of ranking in society. The audience must also be captured by the actors and feel some sort of connection to them. This is known as **catharsis**. In Shakespearean tragedies the protagonist always has a character defect or a **tragic flaw**. This tragic flaw along with pride will cause the protagonist to make an error in judgement leading him to his downfall and eventual death. These two elements are called hubris and hamartia. The unities of time, space, and action must also be followed. This means that the play must take place in a very short period of time, occur in one general area, and follow one main character throughout the play. Shakespeare orates for us a tragic occurrence in the life of a man who once had it all, throws it all away in a fit of jealous rage.

The **downfall of the central character** is the main concept of the tragedy. Without the main character s downfall there is no reason for the reader to **feel pity**, therefore, no tragedy. **The downfall of the protagonist in Shakespearean tragedies always originates from their tragic flaw**. Othello's **tragic flaw** is his **jealousy**, which Iago constantly reminds him about. This is first brought about in act III, scene 3 when Iago asks Othello if he has seen a handkerchief spotted with strawberries. At this point Othello is jealous at Cassio for having won the heart of Desdemona and earned the handkerchief. Upon hearing this Othello flies into a mad fit by saying: **O, that the slave had forty thousand lives! (III, 3, 439**). By his jealousy Othello makes himself very prone to many attacks on him by Iago.

Catharsis is the part of the play that moves the audience and attempts to put them in the actor's shoes. Shakespeare does this by attacking the issue of love. It is a very touchy and emotional subject. Anyone who has ever fallen in love can relate to Othello and Desdemona. They are viewed as the perfect newly-weds who have each other as compliments. Desdemona shows us this by protesting to the Duke and her father that she saw Othello's visage in his mind, "**And to his honor and his valiant parts Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate"**. The **love** between **her** and **Othello** is one of **great passion and breaking barriers**. They were many years apart, came from different races, and were different colors of skin, something that was unheard of in their time. Obstacles such as these, even in our day, are very difficult to overcome. When reading or watching Othello one cannot help but to feel envy for the love they have. In this tragedy, catharsis presents something the audience cannot avoid.

Hubris and Hamartia are two components of a Shakespearean tragedy that are very much intertwined because of their basis on pride. Hubris is when the protagonist is consumed with pride and believes that fate can be beaten. Evidence of Othello's pride is based on the thought; **No one messes around with Othello!** This becomes his eventual downfall. The reader remembers in act III, scene 3 when Iago had planted false evidence of Desdemona s unfaithfulness; Othello reacted in a very calm way, mostly in disbelief. In act IV, scene 1 when Iago brings more evidence of Desdemona s infidelity Othello reacts in a very different and violent way. **Let her rot, and perish, and be damned tonight; for she shall not live** (IV, 1, 183-184). This statement stems from Othello's pride in being a man of high standing who will not be cheated on. Hamartia also comes into play where Othello believes that **fate can be beaten by killing Desdemona.** Even if Othello had escaped death here he would have been removed of his high military status and thrown in jail. Othello was truly a man consumed with pride and wrongly believed that he could defy fate and come out on top by killing what he loved most.

Othello could be considered not to be a tragedy because of its **violation of the unities of time, space, and action**. The unities of time, space, and action state that the story must take place in one city, occur in a short period of time more than 24 hours, and must follow one central character throughout the entire play. Othello does not occur in one city through the entire story. Othello went to war in Cyprus and spent most of his time living in Venice. Although there is very little time spent in Cyprus Othello, the story, does not work along the same lines as Hamlet. In Hamlet almost the entire story took place between the castle walls. As for the unity of action we see something quite different here. The play we studied is titled Othello; therefore, the reader assumes that Othello is the central character. If the book were not named this, it would be quite possible that many readers would believe the title could be Iago and not Othello. Although, Iago is not the good guy but he is in the play just as much or even more than Othello. At the beginning of the play Iago is present and Othello is absent. This is how it is many scenes are in the play.

To conclude, we can say that Othello is Shakespeare's most perfect tragedy because it encompasses all of the elements of a tragedy so wonderfully. The love shared between Othello and Desdemona at the beginning of the play is so much more spectacular than that of Claudius and Gertrude in Hamlet or Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Macbeth. The guilt and wrong felt by Othello after he realizes his errors in judgement are incomparable to the drama in Shakespeare s other tragedies. Any audience viewing Othello for the first time would be captured by the characters because of their relation to the audience. Any experienced Shakespeare reader would have no problem giving Othello the title of most perfect tragedy because it covers all of the elements of a tragedy so wonderfully.

The Themes of Othello

The play Othello is one of the works written by William Shakespeare. It is written approximately in 1603 and was published in 1622, whereas the first performance of this play is in November 1604 (Wikipedia, Chronology of Shakespeare's play). The main themes of Othello revolve around the issue of love, jealousy, fidelity, the incompatibility of military heroism and love and also pride. But as the play unwraps, much more issues come to visible and these will be discuss in details throughout this essay.

The first theme that can be found in this play is **jealousy**. This theme can be said act as the backbone of the entire play. All the events that happen in the play until that leads to Othello's downfall are actually triggered by this form of mischief- jealousy. In this play, jealousy portrays by three characters which are Iago, Roderigo and Othello. Iago's jealousy originates from his dissatisfaction towards Othello who happens to promote the lieutenant post to Michael Cassio, the less experience soldier, instead of him (line 8-22).

This then drives Iago to plan revenge on Othello in order to gain back his reputation. Iago's jealousy is actually the most critical issue in this play. Things would goes differently if Iago has respond in positive way about the promotion and Othello and Desdemona would have live happily with their marriage.

In Roderigo's case however, his jealousy is derives from his disappointment of watching Desdemona (his first love) falls into Othello's hands. In comparison to Iago, Roderigo's jealousy basically is harmless because looking back at Roderigo's ability, he is incapable to plan or even to perform evil tricks on his own. His jealousy is mostly fuels up by Iago who uses him as a pawn in order to play his evil tricks. For instance, in Act II, Iago purposely provokes Roderigo by telling him about Cassio's feeling towards Desdemona so Roderigo will take action and create a trouble that he knows will put Cassio's reputation at risk.

Still, Roderigo is not the only person who is affected by Iago's jealousy. Jealousy is like a disease that will spread from one person to another which if not prevent can cause destruction to all. This is exactly what happens in this play. Iago's hatred and jealousy towards Othello drives him to deceive many people around him including Othello. As part of his evil plans, Iago cunningly uses both Roderigo and Othello's weakness which is Desdemona to entrap them in his wicked schemes. The story he makes up to Othello about Desdemona and Cassio results to another form of jealousy in the play which at the end leads to the death of Desdemona and finally Othello himself. These events show that Iago's character plays as the main contributor to the theme jealousy.

Besides jealousy, the second theme of this play is **reputation** which also relates to **pride**. This play has abundance of characters that progress alongside the theme reputation. This includes Othello, Brabantio, Cassio and last but not least Iago. All of these characters depicts their reputation is as important as their pride through the way they reacts towards the situations that comes up to them. For examples, in the first act we have been introduce to Brabantio who much worries that his daughter's elopement will mark him as a careless father despite his rank as a senator (191-197), while Othello on the other hand becomes depress after suspecting he has been cheating by his wife. The more obvious event that conveys the importance of reputation as one's pride can be found in act II. In this scene, Cassio is at dismay after losing his rank as a lieutenant (253-256). For Cassio, his reputation is what makes him feels better about himself because it let people see him in positive ways.

But, above all the three characters, Iago relatedness with reputation is much stronger than the others. His jealousy, hatred, betrayal and the dark mischievous he creates are all arouses from the idea of reputation. In fact, as part of his revenge's scheme, Iago trickily plays with words and actions to cover up his real intentions in order to gain and maintain his reputation in people's eyes. Iago's action conveys to us that reputation means a lot to him and he is willing to do anything to gain it. From these situations, it suggests that the theme reputation is importance in both domestic and political level.

The third important theme in this play is **fidelity**. In analysing this theme, it is crucial to understand the underlying keys of 'what it is' and 'what is perceived to be' (Maurer, K. 2000) because this is what actually the play Othello is all about. In Othello, fidelity can be analyse between husband-wife, father-daughter, friends and general-servants relationship. For example, in Desdemona's case, although she is wrong by turning away from his father and elope with Othello, but she is the most faithful character of all. Desdemona's love towards Othello is real but if only Othello has faith in her, she would not have become the innocent victim of Iago's evil tricks.

Fidelity would not be complete without thrust and vice versa. Lacks of one of these elements will not promise a strong relationship. This for instance relates to Cassio-Othello-Iago of general-servants relationship. In scene II, Othello thrusts Iago more than Cassio, while as a matter of fact, Iago (the Janus faces) only pretends to be loyal to him.

Although Cassio is the truly faithful servant to Othello yet Othello shows that he lacks of faith in Cassio when he easily thrust Iago's words and unprofessionally removes Cassio from his Lieutenant rank without further investigation. It is indeed an irony that someone with military skill like Othello fails to differentiate between the real enemy and friend. His careless at the end brings about to his own destruction.

Other theme that can be found in this play is **woman status**. In this play, the woman status is represent by two characters which is Desdemona and Emilia where both is similar in the way they are married. In Othello, women has lower status and always powerless than man. What is worse, the unmarried woman is often regards as a property to her father. This actually proves in Act I where Iago and Brabantio indicates Desdemona as if she is one of the properties "Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!" (80- Act I scene I) and "she is abused, stol'n from me and corrupted (60- Act 1 scene III). Besides, men's thought of woman is always weak and powerless can also be trace in this play. During the hearing at the court, it is Othello who voices up to call upon Desdemona and let her speak on her behalf. Desdemona proves that men are wrong and she actually is braver and confidence in voicing up her thought even though the truth will hurt her father.

Last but not least, the **incompatibility of military heroism and love** is also a notable theme of the play. Before and above all else, Othello is a soldier. From the earliest moments in the play, his career affects his married life. Asking "fit disposition" for his wife after being ordered to Cyprus, Othello notes that

> **"the tyrant custom ...**
> **Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war**
> **My thrice-driven bed of down".**

While Desdemona is used to better "accommodation," she nevertheless accompanies her husband to Cyprus. Moreover, she seems unperturbed by the tempest or Turks that threatened their crossing, and genuinely curious rather than irate when she is roused from bed by the drunken brawl in Act II, scene iii. She is, indeed, Othello's "fair warrior," and he is happiest when he has her by his side in the midst of military conflict or business. The military also provides Othello with a means to gain belonging in Venetian society. While the Venetians in the play are generally fearful of the prospect of Othello's social entrance into white society through his marriage to Desdemona, all Venetians respect and honour him as a soldier. Mercenary Moors were, in fact, commonplace at the time.

Othello predicates his success in love on his success as a soldier, wooing Desdemona with tales of his military travels and battles. Once the Turks are drowned—by natural rather than military might—Othello is left without anything to do: the last act of military administration we see him perform is the viewing of fortifications in the extremely short second scene of Act III. No longer having a means of proving his manhood or honour in a public setting such as the court or the battlefield, Othello begins to feel uneasy with his footing in a private setting, the bedroom. Iago capitalizes on this uneasiness, calling Othello's epileptic fit in Act IV, and scene I, "[a]passion most un suiting such a man." In other words, Iago is calling Othello unsoldierly. Iago also takes care to mention that Cassio, whom Othello believes to be his competitor, saw him in his emasculating trance.

Desperate to cling to the security of his former identity as a soldier while his current identity as a lover crumbles, Othello begins to confuse the one with the other. His expression of his jealousy quickly devolves from the conventional—"Farewell the tranquil mind"—to the absurd:

> **Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars**
> **That makes ambition virtue!**
> **O, farewell, Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,**
> **The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,**

The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!"

One might well say that Othello is saying farewell to the wrong things—he is entirely preoccupied with his identity as a soldier. But his way of thinking is somewhat justified by its seductiveness to the audience as well. Critics and audiences alike find comfort and nobility in Othello's final speech and the anecdote of the "malignant and … turbaned Turk", even though in that speech, as in his speech in Act III, scene iii, Othello depends on his identity as a soldier to glorify himself in the public's memory, and to try to make his audience forget his and Desdemona's disastrous marital experiment.

Like any others of Shakespeare's works, the themes in Othello is equally revolves around the issues of human life. Besides love, jealousy, and pride are the common themes that can be found in his work. In conclusion, in Othello, jealousy is the main theme that is proves to be very harmful and can leads to destruction in one's life. It is almost as disastrous as men greediness in gaining reputation. Men willing to do anything to secure their reputation but it still do not promise them that they will get it in the end. What is best is to always be grateful in what one has. The third theme is fidelity which is important in a relationship either between husband and wife, father and daughter, friends or servant and his master. Last but not least, woman has very low status in society compare to men. Their powerless state makes them the easy target to be use by men and easily been discriminate as unchaste which explain why Othello and Iago could be so suspicious with their wife.

Theme of Jealousy in Othello

Throughout Shakespeare's Othello, the major theme of jealousy is apparent. The tragedy Othello focuses on the doom of Othello and the other major characters as a result of jealousy. "Othello" represents jealousy as one of the most corrupting and destructive of emotions. It is jealousy that prompts Iago to plot Othello's downfall; jealousy, too, is the tool that Iago uses to arouse Othello's passions. Roderigo and Bianca demonstrate jealousy at various times in the play, and Emilia demonstrates that she too knows the emotion well. Only Desdemona and Cassio, the true innocents of the story, seem beyond its clutches.

Like a classical tragic hero in the tragedy Othello falls from his position due to his 'tragic flaw' jealousy. **Jealousy** is the main **tragic flaw** that brings about Othello's misfortune, suffering, and death. Though this flaw is fuelled by the external force like the witches in Macbeth, but jealousy seems to have a deep root in Othello's character. It is the main factor that appears to destroy Othello. Iago is the initiator of the chain of events that sparks jealousy in Othello, and eventually leads to the downfall of not only the main character, but also of most of the significant characters of the play.

In Othello Shakespeare presents us with the tragic spectacle of a man who, in spirit of jealous rage, destroys what he loves best in the entire world. We will be able to best realize the tragic effect of jealousy if we consider first the **nature of the relation between Othello and Desdemona**. The marriage between Othello and Desdemona is a real 'marriage of true minds', a true love based on a mutual awareness and a true appreciation of each other's worth, a love that has in it none of the element of sensual lust. The love of Othello and Desdemona transcends the physical barriers of colour, nationality and age. But this love is destroyed as soon as jealousness enters into the mind of Othello.

It is **Iago** who **plants the seeds of suspicion and jealousy in Othello's mind**. In Act III: Scene 3, Cassio speaks to Desdemona, asking her to intercede with Othello on his behalf. Desdemona willingly agrees, knowing that Cassio is an old friend of Othello's. She promises to speak of him with her husband repeatedly until the quarrel is patched up and Cassio is recalled.

In the meantime, Othello and Iago enter and Cassio, who is embarrassed because of his antics the previous night, embraces Desdemona and departs. Iago seizes the opportunity to make an undermining comment — "Ha, I like not that" — that rankles in Othello's mind. Iago further insinuates that Cassio was not just leaving, but that he was "steal[ing] away so guilty-like" (39). Iago's words here are filled with forceful innuendo, and as he pretends to be a man who cannot believe what he sees, he introduces jealousy into Othello's subconscious.

Desdemona greets her husband and, without guilt, introduces Cassio's name into their conversation. Here, fate plays a major role in this tragedy; not even Iago wholly arranged this swift, coincidental confrontation of Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio, and certainly the pathos of Desdemona's position here is largely due to no other factor than fate. Desdemona speaks of Cassio, and Othello, to please her, agrees to see him, but he is distracted by his private thoughts. As Desdemona leaves, Othello chides himself for being irritated by his wife. Lovingly he sighs,

> **"Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,**
> **But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,**
> **Chaos is come again" (90–92).**

A **conversation** follows between **Othello** and **Iago**, in which Iago continues to imply that he knows something that he refuses to divulge, Othello denies that he would give himself over to jealousy. In his denial, he shows himself most vulnerable. He is consumed with doubt and suspicion. Othello voices his old fears that Brabantio was right, that it was unnatural for Desdemona to love him, that he was too horrible to be loved, and that it could not last. Iago leaves, and Othello contemplates his situation: He could be tricked, married to a woman who is already looking at other men, and he fears that he must wipe her out of his heart. He tries to tell himself that it is not true.

Iago also **urges** Othello to **recall** that **Desdemona deceived her own father** by marrying Othello. To Brabantio, Desdemona pretended to be afraid of Othello's dark looks; she pretended to shake and tremble at Othello's exotic demeanor, yet "she lov'd them [Othello's features] most" (207). The implication is clear; Iago does not have to state it: If Desdemona deceived her own flesh and blood, she might just as naturally deceive her husband.

When Desdemona re-enters, Othello's aspect is changed; he watches her intently, looking for signs, and brushes away her handkerchief when she seeks to sooth him. They go in to dinner, and Emilia picks up the fallen handkerchief, one that her husband, Iago, often urged her to steal from Desdemona. Emilia decides to have a copy made to give to Iago, but he enters, sees the handkerchief, and snatches it from her.

When Othello enters, Iago sees that Othello cannot regain his peace of mind. His speech is fevered, sweeping and frantic; he believes that his wife has been unfaithful to him. Othello then turns on Iago with savage intensity and demands to see the proof of Desdemona's infidelity. Cornered, Iago produces the dream story: Cassio spoke in his sleep, embraced him, called him Desdemona, and cursed the Moor. Iago tells Othello that he has seen Cassio wipe his brow with a handkerchief embroidered with strawberries; Othello recognizes this handkerchief as the one he gave to Desdemona.

Othello **dismisses love** and **calls for vengeance**. Certainty has freed his mind from doubt and confusion. Now he swears action, and Iago swears to help him. Othello wants Cassio dead, Iago agrees to do it, and then Othello wonders how to kill Desdemona.

The **fire of jealousy** is further inflamed in Othello **in Act III:** Scene 4.When Othello enters, he claims a headache and asks her for a handkerchief to bind his head, but he will have only the embroidered strawberry handkerchief. Desdemona cannot produce the handkerchief and tries to deflect his questions about the handkerchief, speaking again of Cassio. Othello walks out in fury.

But Othello is totally **engulfed by his jealousy in Act IV:** Scene 1,in which he Sees his wife's **handkerchief** in the hands of Cassio's mistress Bianca. It is, for Othello, the "ocular proof" he sought. He is now convinced of Desdemona's infidelity and knows he must kill both Cassio and Desdemona that very night. This is the second time Othello has sworn to kill both Cassio and Desdemona.

Othello goes directly to the point: "How shall I murder him, Iago?" Othello swears also to kill his wife this night, he curses her and weeps over her at the same time, mingling love and murder: "for she shall not live; no, my heart is turned to stone . . . " (178–179).

Still Othello knows the **pull of love and asks for poison** so that he might kill her at a distance, but he sees justice in Iago's idea of strangling her in her bed, imagining that she has dishonored that bed. Again the agreement is made: Iago is to kill Cassio, and Othello is to kill Desdemona.

Thus we see how the **passion of jealousy**, which **derives from pride and breeds anger**, **gradually gains control over Othello**. The decline in the moral and spiritual stature of Othello goes hand in hand with the destruction of his love for and faith in Desdemona. The theme of jealousy is prominent throughout the play as it motivates the characters' actions.

The dramatic irony is that the most **jealous indignation is expressed over offenses that did not happen**: Othello **jealous** about his **wife**; Bianca **jealous** about **Cassio**; **Iago** formerly **jealous** about **Emilia**. Each character attempts to cope as an individual, except Emilia, who has a theory that jealousy is a constituent part of masculinity. The evidence before her own eyes backs up her assessment.

The theme of 'otherness' in Othello

In this post-colonial context it is impossible to read Shakespeare's Othello without considering the issues of race, color and hegemonic ideologies as they are presented in the play. As we go through the play we see a complex relation between a black man, a white woman and the state.

The **racial conflict** in Othello is evident from the very beginning of the play. Othello is depicted as an 'other' or outsider from the beginning of the play. Within the opening lines of the play, we see how Othello is distanced from much of the action that concerns and affects him. He is ambiguously referred to as "he" or "him" by Roderigo and Iago for much of the first scene and when they do begin to specify just who they are talking about, they use racial epithets, not names.

Iago uses racism in the opening scene of the play as a spark to inflame Desdemona's father, Senator Brabantio, against Othello. After Iago and Roderigo raise a clamour outside Brabantio's house late one evening, the senator awakens and comes to a window. Iago then uses vulgar animal imagery to slur Othello, telling Brabantio that the black Moor has seized his greatest treasure, his daughter, and at that very moment is defiling her.

Iago shouts to Brabantio

> **... now, very now, an old black ram**
> **Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!**

There is an obvious racism in this quote. When Brabantio reacts with incredulity, Iago replies with a metaphor that this time compares Othello to a horse: 'you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse'

Roderigo, whom Iago uses as a cat's-paw, supports Iago's story. Iago then says, **"I am one, sir, that comes to tell you, your daughter and the Moor are now making**

the beast with two backs". Roderigo adds that Desdemona is indeed in the "gross clasps of a lascivious Moor".

Brabantio, now convinced of the truth of the story, tells Roderigo to summon help. Roderigo also refers to Othello as 'Thick lips' and Iago continually uses the word 'slave', which are both racist terms.

The use of **animal imagery** is used to help convey **Othello as a monster** and the choices of animals shows the underlying racism: "Old Black ram" and "Barbary horse". The references to witchcraft and the devil also help to emphasize Othello's differences: "The devil will make a grandsire of you", "the beast with two backs". The playwright uses these characters to paint a picture of Othello as the embodiment of the black stereotype held by people at this time, labeling him as "different" to everyone else.

By and by, Brabantio and others appear. The senator, after denouncing Othello for taking Desdemona to his "sooty bosom" , accuses the Moor of having used "foul charms" and "drugs or minerals" to weaken Desdemona's will.

The **marriage between Othello and Desdemona** was an **inter-racial marriage.** Previously Othello was a favourite to Brabantio and he along with Desdemona had had dinner many times with Othello. But why does he instantly react to the news of the marriage of Othello and Desdemona? It is because Othello is a Black. Instantly the matter becomes an issue in the Venetian council chamber, where the Duke and other senators are preparing for war against the Turks.

There is a clear **theme of racism** throughout, one which was firmly embedded in the Venetian society which rejects the marriage of Othello and Desdemona as wrong, 'against all rules of nature'. Nothing separates Othello from, 'the wealthy curled darlings of our nation,' except skin-colour. Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio combine to give us a portrait of Venetian racism.

After Othello speaks eloquently of his love for Desdemona and she speaks on his behalf, the Duke exonerates Othello. But in doing so, the Duke obliquely denigrates Othello because of his race–apparently unintentionally, in a Freudian slip–telling Brabantio, **"Your son-in-law is more fair than black",** implying that **fairness** is **superior** to **blackness**. Brabantio reluctantly accepts the ruling.

The racial conflict becomes clearer when we consider of **Iago's 'motiveless malignity'** against Othello. Iago seems to have few motives for his devious actions. Although he resents Othello being promoted before himself, it seems that from his speech that the thing he hates most about Othello is the colour of his skin. Because of this he uses unintelligent and colloquial racism to insult Othello. He refers to Othello as, "Thick lips,".

Essentially, **Iago is a representative of the white race**, a pre-Nazi figure who tries to inform the public of the impurity of Othello and Desdemona's marriage. He demonstrates how this miscegenation is threatening to the existing social order.

Having lost a battle, **Iago** continues to plot to win the war, still **using racism** as one of his **weapons**. Consider that in referring to Othello, he sometimes inserts the word black to remind listeners that the Moor is different, a man apart, a man to be isolated. For example, after referring to Othello in Act 1 as a "**black ram**," he tells Michael Cassio in Act 2, Scene 2, "**Come**, **lieutenant**, **I have a stoup of wine, and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello" (25).**

Iago's scheme would not have worked without the **underlying atmosphere of racial prejudice in Venetian society**, a prejudice of which both Desdemona and Othello are very aware. Shakespeare's Desdemona copes with prejudice by denying it access to her

own life: Her relationship with Othello is one of love, and she is deliberately loyal only to that.

The **Jealousy** and **racism** are both **inter-connected**. The thing that fuelled Othello's jealousy was his belief that he is black and Desdemona is white. That he is unfit to retain her attention for long. Othello, in a fundamentally ethnocentric and racist society, finds himself confronted with the horrible reality of this **self-contempt** when there is cause to believe that Desdemona, whose loved had been the shield against his self-contempt, now betrays him too. Thus, Shakespeare's Othello is a psychoanalytic view of a self-loathing man and his doomed attempts to defend himself against a painful reality.

The **society** and culture, Othello finds himself, is one where **racism** and **ethnocentrism prevailed** and **prejudices** abounded. Othello, however, is not aware how deeply prejudice has penetrated into his own personality. This absorbed prejudice undermines him with thoughts akin to "**I am not attractive**," "I **am not worthy of Desdemona**," "It **cannot be true that she really loves me,"** and "**If she loves me, then there must be something wrong with her."** These thoughts, inflamed by Iago's hints and lies, prevent Othello from discussing his concerns and fears directly with Desdemona, and so he acts on panicked assumption. In order to survive the combined onslaught of internalized prejudice and the directed venom of Iago, Othello would have had to be near perfect in strength and self-knowledge, and that is not a fair demand for anyone.

Thus racism plays a significant part in bringing the tragedy of Othello. Shakespeare is also sending an anti-racist message through his play Othello. Those who discriminate people racially are the truly devious characters and Shakespeare shows this clearly through Iago and Brabantio. Iago is portrayed as the most evil villain and also the hateful racist. By presenting the main villain of the play to have such deep-rooted racism, Shakespeare is denouncing those who attack people purely on the basis of the colour of their skin or their nationality.

Theme of Honesty in Othello

Shakespeare's well-known play Othello, first performed in 1604, explores the theme of honesty in detail. The words 'honest' and 'honesty' themselves are used 52 times in the text. On a deeper level, the characters in this play and their actions help to support the theme of honesty. The play's villain, Iago, is the epitome of dishonesty and his untruthful nature is contrasted with the innocent Cassio and Desdemona. Emilia, Iago's wife, is neither fully honest nor fully dishonest in her actions and dialogue, providing an interesting role in the play. The central theme of honesty is linked to motifs in the play, including reputation and irony.

Iago is an extremely manipulative character and a very good liar. He uses his skills in deception to lie to almost every other character in the play – in particular Othello, but also to Roderigo and Cassio. It is only the audience that knows of Iago's true intentions and feelings. Iago tells the viewers in a soliloquy – **"I do hate [Othello] as I do hell's pains**" and **"nothing can… content my soul till I am even'd with him".**

Despite his consistent lying, he holds a **reputation for being honest**. It is this reputation that makes Othello believe every word Iago says, even calling him "honest Iago". Othello's appointment of Iago as an officer (because "a man he is of honesty and trust") and also him giving Iago the duty of transporting his beloved wife to Cyprus clearly show that Othello had full trust in Iago. This ultimately leads to Othello's death. Although certain aspects of Othello's personality played a part in his downfall, Iago's skill and care in his dishonest deeds could have fooled the biggest disbeliever. The original Elizabethan audience of Othello would have known that Satan is called 'the father of lies',

so Iago's dishonesty increases his villain status. The Elizabethan connection between the devil and lying is also seen when Othello "look[s] down toward [Iago's] feet" when he discovers the truth about him – Othello was seeing whether or not Iago had devils hooves (the foot of a horse, deer, cow, or similar animal, covered with horny material) for feet. **Iago** is a **main character** whose **dishonesty results** in **several main events** in Othello. His personality emphasizes the central theme of honesty because his complete lack of it highlights the truthfulness of other characters.

Honesty in the 21st century is usually defined as telling the truth, but in the context of Othello is also means chastity. **Desdemona is honest in both senses of the word**. She remains completely faithful to her husband Othello and never tells a lie in the play. However, her secret marriage to Othello can be seen as deceptive. One can assume that she may have had to lie, or at least hide the truth from certain people, in order for her marriage to be carried out. She redeems herself somewhat when she whole-heartedly professes her love towards Othello in front of her father and the court. Still, the cunning Iago uses the fact that Desdemona betrayed her father to his advantage when trying to convince Othello of Desdemona's unfaithfulness – "she did deceive her father, marrying you". The one thing that Desdemona does which is somewhat untruthful is used by Iago, in a way that eventually leads to her murder. There is much irony in the fact that Othello chooses to believe everything the lying Iago says, while not believing anything the truthful Desdemona has to say. Furthermore, the more Desdemona tells the truth, the less Othello is inclined to trust her. When she repeatedly tries to convince Othello to reinstate Cassio, she thinks that she is doing a good thing, when she is really just increasing Othello's suspicions. Shakespeare shows in Othello that though honesty is a worthy trait to have, there are many other factors that will affect other's opinions of oneself. In the case of Desdemona, her honesty was not enough to save her life.

Iago's dishonesty is **contrasted** with **Desdemona**, but is also contrasted with the character of **Cassio.** The word honest is used several times to describe Cassio. Although Cassio considers Desdemona to be "indeed perfection" he never pursues Desdemona, knowing that she and Othello are in a loving relationship. He is also the only attendant at their wedding. The **differences** in **Iago** and **Cassio** in terms of **honesty** relate well to the **motif of reputation**. Despite his lying ways, **Iago** retains his **honest cover-up** right until the end of the play. On the other hand, **Cassio's reputation is ruined** when he takes part in a drunken fight, costing him his esteemed military position. From this point onwards, Othello no longer fully trusts Cassio. This demonstrates the importance of reputation, whether one's reputation is actually valid or not. Othello continued to trust Iago throughout the play because Iago was still seen as a very honest man. If Othello ever doubted Iago, the play could easily have been very different. Iago may not have been honest but his honest reputation served him well and allowed him to carry out his scheming plans.

Emilia is an **interesting character** in Othello in regards to **honesty**. She did take Desdemona's handkerchief and give it to Iago, which he then used to fully convince Othello of Desdemona's infidelity. As Iago's wife for a number of years, one assumes that she must have had some idea of Iago's dishonesty. However, we must remember that in Shakespeare's time women were always inferior to their husbands, and if Emilia were to risk her marriage she would also risk any hope of leading a respectable life. When Emilia does find out that Iago lied about Desdemona and Cassio, she is horrified **– "My husband say that she was false?..If he say so, may his pernicious soul rot**

half a grain a day! He lies to the heart." Despite threats from Othello she is the one that tells everyone that of Iago's lies and that Othello killed Desdemona. There is irony when she speaks of the consequences of dishonesty in front of the most dishonest character in the play, Iago. She says that the person who lied about Desdemona is an **"eternal villain, some busy and insinuating rogue, some cogging, cozening slave".** Emilia is important to the central theme of honesty in Othello because while she was technically, though unknowingly, Iago's accomplice, she clearly did not stand for deceitfulness and was brave enough to tell the truth, even when it cost Emilia her life.

In Othello, the stark **contrast** between the **innocence** of **Desdemona** and **Cassio** and the **double nature** of the **villainous** Iago promotes the central theme of honesty. Through Iago's plans, much tension is created as Othello continues to trust Iago due to his honest reputation, while holding his disbelief in the honest characters, Cassio and Desdemona. The irony of this situation keeps the audience engaged, while the role of Emilia as the truth teller of the play provides interest and also is another contrast with her lying husband Iago. The interactions between honesty and dishonesty are vital to the play Othello because they lead to the occurrence of significant events, most notably the event that makes this play a tragedy, the suicide of the protagonist Othello.

The Role of Women in Othello

In Othello by William Shakespeare, the role of Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca portray how women were during the 15th century. Women were portrayed as being **loyal** to their **husbands**; **doing what they are** told, and **not going against their husband's judgment** or **actions**. These women represent three different characteristics in which women are being recognized in Othello. The women in Othello represent various levels of **class, virtue, and intelligence**. **Desdemona** is aristocratic, virtuous, and makes her own decisions; **Emilia** is the middle **class**, a **maid**, **manipulated** by Iago and loyal to Desdemona; and **Bianca** is the **bottom** of the line, being represented as a **strumpet** (prostitute). Iago states how women are weak, lazy, and inane and only desire physical pleasure.

Throughout the play **Desdemona symbolizes innocence and helplessness**. The first encounter with Desdemona, Shakespeare describes her as being mature and quite perceptive of events around her, especially when we meet Desdemona and how mature she is when she defends her love for Othello to her father Brabantio. Iago often tells Othello that she is unfaithful because Iago is implementing into Othello's head that Desdemona is committing adultery with Cassio. She has a tendency to be sympathetic towards other people's situations, like Cassio. This also further inspired Othello's jealousy when Iago pointed out they were speaking in privacy. She often pays attention to other people's thoughts yet remains cynical if they differ to her own. She's loyal to her husband in all aspects of life, whether it is mental or physical.

Desdemona is like a **peacemaker** because when Othello wanted to "fire" Cassio, she wanted peace between them. Therefore she talks to Cassio in private, which this leads to her husband accusing her of cheating. After the fight between Othello and Cassio, Desdemona wants to make peace between them. In today's society, Desdemona is known as a housewife who cares for her husband and is behind him every step of the way. However, when it comes to the arguing with Othello, she becomes a woman being emotional abused by her husband, leading her death by her own husband at the end.

Emilia is Iago's wife, which says something about her **submissive** character already. She is also Desdemona's handmaiden; this is a vital part in her role in the play. She is the wife of pure evil, Iago, and the maid of the most kind, Desdemona. Emilia unknowingly plays a large role in Iago's plan and is never suspicious. Emilia is, in some

cases, the opposite of Desdemona. Even though women should be faithful and loyal to their husband, she considers that women should have a voice; be more independent and not relying on their husbands' all the time.

Emilia gets angry at the fact that Othello calls Desdemona an unfaithful wife, hence her stating, in Act 4, Scene 3, "But I do think it is their husbands' faults/ If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties, /And pour our treasures into foreign laps; /Or else break out in peevish jealousies, /Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us, /Or scant our former having in despite: /Why, we have galls; and though we have some grace, /Yet have we some revenge…" (217). Here Emilia is questioning men and how men can't be without women. Yes, men say that women are lazy and this and that, but women have more of a saying in this world then men do. The speech that Emilia gives talks about how women should not be a "slave" to their husbands. All women have a voice and that we should be independent and be respected.

Bianca is very **obedient** and **sweet-tempered**, leading her to have a good number of suitors. Bianca is the strumpet who Cassio is with; her role seems small but significant. Bianca, even though called a strumpet, she is also considering as a woman with a goal. Her goal is to feel love and trusted by a man, but she is deceived as a whore, especially from Emilia. Bianca is brought into this play as Cassio's jealous mistress; he gives her Desdemona's handkerchief, not realizing whose handkerchief it really was. She was aware of the great risk involved when she married a moor. All three characters feel that they, as women, should not be judge nor treated with any less respect as a man does because women have a voice and they need to be heard.

Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca live in a society where women can't do the thing men do. Desdemona generously nature tries to help Cassio retrieve his spot as Lieutenant back. Emilia had illusions about men or love or marriage vows, even after Desdemona explains the importance of the handkerchief. But, these three women live by their own wills. As Iago reminded Othello in Act 3, Scene 3 the faithless wife is a well-known member of Venetian society. Somewhat like Iago, Othello also see women as strumpets and unfaithful after the Iago convinces Othello in the adultery that Desdemona is committing. In Act 4, Scene 2, Othello says "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, /Made to write "whore" upon? What committed? /Committed? O thou public commoner. /I should make very forges of my cheeks, /That would to cinders burn up modesty, /Did I but speak thy deeds" (197). As mentioned in this quote, Othello see women as being unfaithful and mostly consider them as whores, especially his wife.

Both Desdemona and Emilia are **loyal to their husbands**, however, Desdemona is more of a person who hides her true self because she feels that a women should not argue with her husband, the one she loves because during the Renaissance women were seen more as being the house wife and do agree to every decision and action their husband make. Hence the reason why she doesn't defend herself as well as she supposed to when Othello believes that she has committed adultery. Emilia is also respectful and loves her husband Iago, but when Othello calls Desdemona a whore we see another side of Emilia in which she thinks that calling his own wife a whore, is basically crossing a line. She questions the role of men because once you're married a trust and loyal bond is born; there shouldn't be any type of disrespect within "soul mates". Bianca is just a woman who is looking for some affection, but is independent to be with whoever she wants because she is not really committed with anyone.

Women during the 15th century were considered more as being a house maid/house wife. Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca represent the three different sides of women: the **noble and loyal one**, the one who **believes in having a voice**, and the **one who wants affection from a guy who is easy** (strumpet). These stereotypes, women are still being compared to in today's society. We learn something about each of these female stereotypes. Over a period of time, women have fought for the respect and equality; even though these stereotypes still exist today, women are stronger in

defending themselves and more respected. Shakespeare brings the theme of women roles because we learn how women felt during that time and how history brought women to be equal to men.

Gender and Race in Othello

In many of his works, William Shakespeare explores ideas of gender differences and racial tensions. Othello, a play whose characters are judged again and again based on appearances and outward characteristics, is one such work. The protagonist's different ethnic background provides a platform for probing ideas of racial conflict. Similarly, the presence of well-developed yet opposing female characters adds a dimension of gender conflict and feminist views. These seemingly separate themes of Othello-sexual difference and racial conflict-are closely connected because of similar ties of prejudgment and stereotype. The play's treatment of sexual difference and gender roles strengthens Othello's racist tones and complicates ethnic tensions.

Women are an integral part of Othello. The chastity of a woman is highly valued, and Desdemona's perceived infidelity helps drive the action of the play, ultimately leading to the deaths of many characters, including herself and her husband Othello. Iago's hatred of women is evident throughout the play and could be part of his motivation to lead Othello to such jealousy. Desdemona and Emilia, her waiting lady, provide the central conflict for feminist and gender ideas. Women in Othello are portrayed with complexity and an obvious tension between feminist and anti-feminist ideals.

Desdemona, Othello's wife and Brabantio's daughter, is portrayed as the ideal woman. She is beautiful, chaste, and virtuous. Cassio describes her as "divine" (2.1.74) and tells Iago that "she is indeed perfection" (2.3.25). When her father questions her about her love for Othello, she gives the acceptable answer and professes loyalty to both Brabantio and Othello, claiming that the Moor is now her lord (1.3.183-191). Desdemona is eloquent and independent. She asserts herself and boldly professes her love for Othello to her father and the duke. She is honest in her love for her husband, wishing that "our loves and comforts should increase even as our days do grow" (2.1.193-194). Desdemona does not profess any feminist ideals or notions about love or relationships. She claims she would never cheat on her husband, not even "for the whole world" (4.3.82). She also appears to be submissive and passive in her marriage. She even identifies her own "simpleness" (1.3.249). On many occasions, Desdemona obeys her husband unfalteringly and calls herself obedient (3.3.97). Even after Othello hits her, she does is bidding and leaves because she "will not stay to offend" him (4.1.250). Later after she has been abused, she asks Iago, "What shall I do to win my lord again?" (4.2.155). Desdemona remains subject to her husband even until he murders her, going so far as to tell Emilia that she killed herself (5.2.128), an admission of guilt for a crime she clearly did not commit. Desdemona is ideal in the sense that she is chaste and virtuous throughout the entire play. She also appears to be intelligent and is willing to stick up for herself to her father and defend her love for Othello. In her relationship with Othello, however, she is passive and submissive, the stereotypical meek wife.

Emilia, Iago's wife, is a stark contrast to Desdemona. In some respects, she too seems to be obedient to her husband. She picks up the handkerchief that Othello gave Desdemona because Iago "hath a hundred times wooed [her] to steal it" (3.3.308-309), also saying that she does "nothing but to please his fantasy" (3.3.315). In the same speech, however, Emilia also calls her husband "wayward" (3.3.308). After she gives him the handkerchief, she asks Iago why he wants it and threatens to take it back if it is not for some good purpose (3.3. 333.335). Earlier in the play, Emilia talks back to Iago, asserting her independence when she says to him, "You shall not write my praise" (2.1.118). In her conversation with Desdemona about infidelity, Emilia informs her friend that she would commit adultery, giving the tongue-in-cheek response of "Nor I neither by this heavenly light; I might do 't as well i' the dark" (4.3.68-69). She professes her

opinion that if the wife falls, it is her husband's fault (4.3.89) and asserts her belief that women have "some revenge" (4.3.96-97). Emilia provides the feminist voice of Othello, asserting her independence from her husband and even admitting that she would commit adultery if the price were right. Her attitude towards men is somewhat cynical, as she says "They are all but stomachs, and we all but food; They eat us hungerly, and when they are full They belch us" (3.4.106-108).

The male characters of the play view women in varied ways. Cassio often idealizes Desdemona, praising her positive characteristics, even believing that she is "perfection" (2.3.25). Iago's attitude towards women is largely critical and negative. He tells Emilia that women are "pictures out of doors, Bells in your parlors, wildcats in your kitchens, Saints in your injuries, devils being offended, Players in your huswifery, and huswives in your beds" (2.1.111-114), meaning that women are often deceptive. He later says, "She never yet was foolish that was fair, For even her folly helped her to an heir" (2.1.137-138). Iago's cynical attitude towards women continues throughout the play, as he talks of women as being foolish and unfaithful creatures. Othello's views on women are more complex than Iago's. Othello loves and praises Desdemona often in the play. He tells Iago, "But that I love the gentle Desdemona, I would not my unhoused free condition Put into circumscription and confine for the sea's worth" (1.2.25-28). Othello tells his wife that he "cannot speak enough of this content…it is too much of joy" (2.1.196-197). After he believes that Desdemona is being unfaithful, however, his attitude changes dramatically. He becomes cynical and hostile, even hitting his wife (4.1.243). He accuses her, calls her a strumpet, and murders her because of her perceived infidelity (5.2). Othello's attitudes towards women transform from idealization into hatred.

There is a conflict in Othello between traditional views of women and more feminist views, as well as a conflict between the idealization of women and the resentment of women. Emilia is a feminist, assertive, independent model of womanhood, while Desdemona plays the ideal and passive female character. Women are portrayed in a varied and complex way in Othello.

The racial tension in the play is similar to the gender role tension because of opposing views. While Othello's specific ethnic background is not clear, he is obviously an outsider to Venetian society, of Northern African or African descent. His portrayal in the play is complicated, with evidence supporting both a racist view of the text and a non-racist view.

While Othello is the protagonist of the play, he is also responsible for Desdemona's murder. Iago holds strongly racist views towards him. He describes Othello and Desdemona's consummation as "an old black ram…tupping…a white ewe" (1.1.90-91) and "making the beast with two backs" (1.1.119-120). Iago calls him "an erring barbarian" (1.3.358) and claims that he is lacking in "a fresh appetite, loveliness in favor, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties" (2.1.230-231). He also describes Othello as "rash and very sudden in choler" (2.1.273). Iago is not the only character who holds racist attitudes towards Othello. Roderigo refers to him as "thick-lips" (1.1.68) and calls him "lascivious" (1.1.129). Brabantio cannot believe that his daughter could be happy with this outsider (1.1.167), and he thinks that the only way Othello could have wooed Desdemona is with charms (1.1.175-177). He accuses Othello, calling out, "O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?" (1.2.63). Brabantio claims that now Desdemona is "abused, stol'n…and corrupted By spells and medicines" (1.3.62-63). Othello himself says that he is "black and [has] not those soft parts of conversation" (3.3.279-280). When Othello believes that his wife has been unfaithful he claims that he will "tear her all to pieces" (3.3.446). In Act 4, he hits Desdemona, evidence of his violent temper and proneness to abuse (4.2.242). Othello could easily be read as a racist play. Its hero is often described in racist, degrading tones, and he is portrayed as abusive, jealous, and even murderous.

This play, however, also provides a contrasting view. While Othello is portrayed as violent in some scenes, he is the victim of the evil manipulation of Iago. Many characters in the play deeply respect Othello. Cassio entreats the "heavens [to] Give him defense against the elements" (2.1.46-47) and asks Jove to guard him (2.1.79). Iago himself admits that Othello is "of a constant loving, noble nature [and] will prove to Desdemona A most dear husband" (2.1.290-292). Montano describes him as "noble," (2.3.132) and many of his subordinates admire him. Othello is eloquent, as evident in his many speeches, such as the one in Act 1, Scene 3 (l.78-96). He claims that he won Desdemona's heart through his stories and words. He is confident, professing that his "parts, [his] title, and [his] perfect soul Shall manifest [him] rightly" (1.2.31-32). Othello asserts that he has "done the state some service" (5.2.349). While Othello is an outsider to this society in many ways, he is not completely excluded. He is a Christian, meaning he has accepted the religion of his society. He is a general in the army, so he has a respectable social status, and the majority of the population likes and admires Othello, even Brabantio, until he discovers the marriage of Othello and Desdemona. He is portrayed as courageous and honorable, and his love for his wife seems to be genuine. It is obvious throughout the play that Othello's jealousy and even his violence are a result of Iago's evil.

Racial tension in Othello is complicated because there are both racist and non-racist strains in the play. Iago is the most vocal racist character, but his racism and judgments are not portrayed positively. Other characters, however, also voice negative attitudes towards Othello because of his ethnicity. Although the protagonist is thought of as a brave and noble character, he is also portrayed as rash and violent, a common stereotype of "Moors." Othello's sexual relationship with Desdemona is described in carnal, beastial terms.

The negative language used to describe Othello is far stronger than the positive language used, and the images of Othello hitting and even murdering Desdemona are highly powerful. This language portrays Othello as animalistic and not as highly civilized because he cannot control his passions. These associations serve to perpetuate stereotypes of Africans and others of different ethnic identity. While Othello is certainly a victim of Iago's evil in this play, he is not a primarily sympathetic character. His deeds and his rage are not the result of any noble motivation, but simply mad jealousy. The racist tones of Othello are overpowering and outweigh the non-racist tones of the play.

Sexual difference and racial difference are both at the center of conflicts in this play. Women are judged by some characters as unfaithful and deceptive, simply because they are women. Othello is judged harshly simply because he is black. There is tension between the traditional ideal of woman and a more progressive view, just as there is tension between a racist society and an accepting society. The play's treatment of feminist tension and gender difference only serves to add to the racial overtones.

Women are treated as harshly as Othello is by Iago and other characters in the play. Women are assumed to be unfaithful, even by Othello himself, who has no real proof with which to accuse Desdemona of infidelity. Both Desdemona and Emilia are abused, either verbally or physically or both, by their husbands and other male characters in the play. Women are prejudged as guilty and wanton in Othello. These quick conclusions add to the overall tone of stereotyping, thereby strengthening the racist strains in the play.

Feminist and anti-feminist ideas are presented very clearly, with Desdemona representing one extreme, the passive ideal wife, and Emilia representing the other extreme, a progressive, independent, assertive woman. It is Desdemona, however, who is Othello's wife. It is Desdemona who is unfairly accused, abused, and strangled. While Emilia is also murdered by her husband, Desdemona is smothered (5.2.87), which suggests that she is controlled and manipulated to a greater degree than Emilia, whose murder is more rash and passionate. The portrayal of Desdemona's and Othello's

marriage plays up the stereotype of the violent Moor and the passive wife. This adds to the racial tones of the play and strengthens the racist view that Othello takes.

Gender differences and the tension between Emilia's feminist viewpoints and Desdemona's traditional ones serve to reinforce racism against Othello in this play. These tensions strengthen the view of Othello as a violent, even animalistic outsider. While Othello presents conflicting views on racism and stereotypes, the overall picture is one in which the play's protagonist is treated with an edge of racist overtones.

Role of Chance and Coincidence in Othello

Othello is, among all the tragedies of Shakespeare, one in which the role of chance and accident is the most prominent. Iago’s skill was extraordinary, but so was his good fortune. Throughout the play we have instances of chances favouring Iago’s plot which otherwise would not have succeeded so easily.

A chance **words from Desdemona**, a chance **meeting of Othello and Cassio**, a question which starts to our lips and which anyone but Othello would have asked, would have destroyed Iago’s plot and ended his life. In their stead Desdemona drops her **handkerchief** at the moment most favourable to him, Cassio blunders into the presence of Othello only to find him in a swoon (loss of consciousness), Bianca arrives precisely when she is wanted to complete Othello deception and incense his anger to fury. All this and much more seems to us quite natural, so potent is the art of the dramatist; but it confounds us with a feeling (that) there is no escape from fate, and even with a feeling, absent from that play, that fate has taken sides with villainy”.

However all of these are not due to mere chance or accident. The dropping of Desdemona’s handkerchief at the moment when it is just right for Iago’s plot, Cassio’s arrival in front of Othello when he is in a swoon, and Bianca’s arrival when it suits Iago happen so close together that they appear as a single stroke of “the devil’s luck” for Iago. They can be called coincidences, deliberately contrived.

Many of the events that seem to be “accidents” are actually due to Iago’s brilliant contrivance. Brabantio is deliberately brought in, after being inflamed by both Roderigo and Iago at Desdemona’s deception, to embarrass Othello with his outcry and also to pave the way for later accusations to encourage Othello’s distrust of her:

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceived her father, and may thee.

Through **Iago’s skilful manipulation** Cassio gets drunk, lapses from the duty assigned to him and gets involved in a brawl and Othello comes in the middle of the night to demote him. This develops the situation further leading to Desdemona’s pleas on behalf of Cassio’s reinstatement, thus providing Iago opportunity for counter-insinuations regarding Desdemona and Cassio’s relationship. Desdemona drops her handkerchief by accident; Emilia is there to pick it up and gives it to Iago.

From then on **Iago guides** the ensuing events. He takes the handkerchief and leaves it in Cassio’s chamber, uses it as evidence with which to convince Othello, and supplies the construction Othello places upon the subsequent history of the handkerchief. Othello, beguiled as he is by Iago, at this point, has no independent judgment regarding the “evidence” provided by Iago. He does not try to investigate further the circumstances but blindly follows Iago’s insinuations and suggestions.

These accidents do not in any way diminish the **importance of “character**” in the tragedy. Despite the accident, Othello carries the full responsibility of his actions on his shoulders. He allowed human reason tube over ruled by passions and the will. We see how Iago infects Othello, corrupt his power of reasoning, makes him “passion’s slave” so that he commits a tragic murder without realizing his mistake. Such is the power of evil

and the deliberate malice of Iago. Othello recognizes his fatal error and accepts full responsibility of the wrong he has done and the remorse he feels finally destroys him, which makes him a tragic hero.

The **role of accidents** in Othello is less significant because they are not simply the workings of fate but **situations cleverly manipulated and exploited by a human agent**-Iago. Iago plans most of the events, calculates the motives and responses of his victims, and profits with diabolical cleverness from the chances, which occur and uses them to serve his purpose. Desdemona happened to be a Venetian and woman of Venice did not have a good reputation:

In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands, their best conscience
Is not leave't undone, but keep't unknown?

These are Iago's words as he pollutes Desdemona's character by his vulgar insinuations. Also,

She did deceive her father, marrying you.

Iago **uses the circumstances** to his **own advantage**, which is how his evil mind works. Othello is a Moor and Iago also uses this racial difference and his advanced age to imply that Desdemona has lost interest in him. Being a man of vehement feelings he trusts Iago completely, which is his undoing. Once the doubt is planted in his mind it takes complete control over him and he is carried along in a whirlwind of jealousy and emotion. He admits,

"No, my heart is turn'd to stone;
I strike it, and it hurts my hand".

Iago builds a cruel hatred in his heart against Desdemona and in his agony Othello cries,

"O, blood, blood, and blood!"
Once he is resolved, there is no turning back for him. He compares his desire for revenge to the "icy current and compulsive course" of the Ponitc Sea that keeps moving forward:
"Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up".

Othello had not known Desdemona long and she was the first woman in his life. All his life he had spent in camps and campaigns, which gave him no experience where women were concerned. Iago on the other hand, was also a professional soldier and had served with Othello so he knew how his mind worked. It was easy to plant a doubt in Othello's mind that young girl of Desdemona's beauty and gentle breeding could feel more than a passing fancy for a Moor like him, no matter how great and noble he was. Othello's jealousy rises to uncontrollable passion that blinds him making him fall into trance-like state, totally unlike his normal calm self. Iago spends much of his time, in his soliloquies, attempting to explain to us how and why it all happened. It is this element of credibility which minimizes the so-called role of chance. The end of this tragedy only vindicates human worth and dignity in the justice that Othello bravely administers to himself.

The Theory of 'Double Time' in Othello

We experience both a long and a short passage of time while reading or witnessing the play. The double impression is not troubling us while actually reading or seeing the play. In fact several plays of Shakespeare seem to produce the same effect. This is bound to be so in any powerful play because the actual time, in which a play is staged, is definitely shorter than the time required for the events in the real life. This is so in all romantic plays as compared with the 'classical' plays in which the unities of time and place are observed.

“Short time” is also needed in Othello to make the action credible. The intensity of the passion of jealousy cannot be prolonged for the reason that, if delayed, it will either cool down, or the plot of Iago will surely be revealed to Othello by Cassio who is not allowed to meet his master in the play after he (Cassio) is dismissed. For these reasons, it is necessary that the action of the play must be made to move most speedily. This is what happens in the play from scene to scene particularly from act two onwards when the main characters of the tragedy arrive from Venice to the Island of Cyprus.

It is indeed from this point onward that the tragic action begins. It is on the same day of their arrival in Cyprus that at night the marriage festivities take place. It is during these Cassio is involved in a drinking and is dismissed.

Next morning Iago makes Cassio to go and request Desdemona to plead his case to Othello. At the next meeting Iago brings Othello, and Desdemona, surprised and confused, requests Othello to restore Cassio. It is in this scene that Iago begins to poison the mind of Othello with suspicion of Desdemona’s love for Cassio. It is here; too, that Desdemona drops her handkerchief, which Iago picks up. He then tells Othello that the he saw Cassio whipping his lips with the handkerchief. Othello asks Iago to kill Cassio.

Next, Cassio meets Bianca and asks her to copy the design of the handkerchief, which he found dropped in his own room. Iago now proves Cassio’s guilt by concealing Othello in such a way that he could overhear Cassio’s talk with Iago. In this conversation, Cassio talks of his affairs with Bianca and Othello is made to believe that Cassio is talking about Desdemona.

Soon after this, Iago gets Cassio killed by Roderigo who is himself killed by Iago. Othello then orders Desdemona to go to bed alone and smothers her in the bed. Before she dies, he learns the truth about her innocence, and thus it happens that Othello kills himself.

All these actions are shown to be done on the same night, that is to say, on the night following the arrival of Othello and party on the Island of Cyprus. The time covered by is a day and a night. This is the impression of ‘short time’ as dramatized on the stage in Othello.

However, this impression of ‘short time’ is made on us against a background of ‘long time’, converging several days pass before the tragic action takes place. For example, Roderigo complains that Iago has made him several promises, which have not been fulfilled. He complains that he has been following him for several days and that all his money (and all his patience too) has been exhausted. Nest, Bianca complains that Cassio has not met her for more than seven days and seven nights. Besides these, we also note that some weeks should have passed before Othello was recalled from Cyprus. The voyage between Venice and Cyprus certainly took several days.

Thus we get an impression of a longer time of married life before Othello kills Desdemona. Any delay or long time would surely have brought out the truth of Desdemona or Cassio’s innocence.

Such an effort reveals to us the dramatic genius of Shakespeare who is able to play astonishing tricks is played at all. This is the willing suspension of disbelief, which is the essence of artistic illusion. We are not aware of the presence of double time while we are actually witnessing the performance of the play. We are aware of it when we critically examine the details of the text. We should clearly understand that Shakespeare is deliberately compressing the action of the play in order to achieve the speed and intensity of the same, which are necessary for the powerful tragic feelings they produce. The action and passion of jealousy should be quick in order to be credible and powerful. In the case of Othello’s jealousy we need to assume to have in the text of the play. The cause of his passion is evidently adultery, but there is no time during, which this could

have happened during the tempestuous voyage. As we know, Cassio and Desdemona sail in different ships. And in Venice itself there was no occasion for adultery because Desdemona starts for Cyprus on the very day of marriage.

Where, then could such a crime have happened? It is to answer such a question that Shakespeare produces the impression of a longer time for the action of the play. He throws several suggestions, gives several hints and indications in the course of the text, which point to the probability of such longer time. What he does is that he presents a series of continuous and unbroken events on the stage, but these events are presented against a back ground of other events, which are not presented but narrated, and it is because of these events that we suppose that a longer time was needed to create the suspicion of crimes—of adultery in particular. It is not real adultery but the supposition and suspicion of it which causes the real tragedy. Iago makes Othello imagine that adultery has been committed. It is in his efforts to produce this impression that the impression of long time is suggested.

Shakespeare's dramatic art is precisely seen in taking this 'long time 'story and combining it with the impression of 'short time' –without letting the audience realize that such a combination is at all made. So we conclude that there is evidently in Othello a parallel of 'short 'and 'long' time impression, and that both these are necessary for a fuller appreciation of the tragedy.

Othello as a Domestic Tragedy

The story and theme of Othello is one that comes home to the business and bosoms of mankind that again, is to say that Othello dramatizes an emotion with which we are familiar, and which some of us might very well be expected to experience, namely, the doubt and suspicion whether wives are always loyal in conjugal relations—Or husbands, for that matters, jealousy in married life is a common experience and therefore a play that deals with it might very well be regarded as a domestic one. The problem of happiness in married life is closely related with the harmony existing at home between husband and wife. And this is precisely the harmony that Iago, in his aside, intends to destroy when he exclaims. "**I will set down the pegs that make this music**," this is what he says as he sees Othello in raptures with Desdemona, and hears him say:

And this, and this, the greatest discords be.
That ever our hearts will make.

That is how we also see Othello on the stage with Desdemona in his arms as they both arrive in Cyprus after the terrible stormy voyage they undertook from Venice. Othello is playfully, yet passionately, kissing Desdemona and utters these words as he does so. This is a domestic scene of exquisite joy and sweetness, and it is an emotion, which we can share.

Besides this principal theme, which is a domestic one, we meet with, in Othello the people who are not far removed from us on social position. They are not kings and queens and princes and princesses but common subjects of the state, where they serve in several capacities. In other words, we can understand and share their joys and sorrows; we are at home with them and their problems. Hence, it is that note of intimacy is struck between the dramatis persona and us. This account for the 'domestic' atmosphere of Othello. (The Moor of Venice)

It is interesting to note that **marital jealousy** was a very popular theme on the Elizabethan stage. Othello, thus, could very well be described as a domestic and private life do not rise to the heights of great tragedy and that they lack the emotive force of the latter where the figures belong to high life such of kings and queens. It may be said of this criticism that it is not sound. As Dr. Johnson long ago pointed out,

"Shakespeare is always thinking primarily on men and their emotions however exalted their lives on the worldly plane might be. Hamlet and Lear do not affect us because they are kings and sons of kings but because they are mortals with all the errors and weakness to which mortal life in there. Secondly, even if Othello and Desdemona and Roderigo and Cassio do not belong on the political plane to the same order as Hamlet and Lear do, they are still endowed with a dignity and virtue, which do distance them from the merely average human nature, which we ordinarily known. The agony and passion of Othello is jealousy, the pitiful innocence and grace of the pleading Desdemona, the beauty and frankness of Cassio, which even his worst enemy, Iago, has to acknowledge even Roderigo the fool, with his worship of beauty, which Desdemona inspires these certainly cannot be described as lacking in emotive force. If anything, their fate and fortunes affect us most powerfully because we recognize in their natures, which we share and understand. Life is life—whether lived in private or in public and in Shakespeare's tragedies in particular life is piled on life, and therefore domestic story dealing with the private lives of common human nature is capable of exciting feelings of pity and terror as powerful as those that are excited by the lives of kings and queens. It all depends how life is dramatically presented. Shakespeare is perfect because he knows how to exploit life at all levels for the purpose of moving the hearts of his audience. Hence we conclude that private life can be as emotionally stirring and uplifting as life on any other level."

The tragedy of Othello and Desdemona is made by Shakespeare one of the most soul-stirring subjects in this play. It is not merely the story of jealous husbands but the type and symbol of fate, which causes the suffering of people who are really innocent Othello a great figure worthy of our awe and admiration on account of which we feel his tragedy as one that might as well happen to every one of us. The turning of a loving husband into a vindictive Iago as the cause of tragic misunderstanding. Iago is indeed the type of tragic fate. And his villainy is so subtle that there is an element of universality in his evil nature.

So Othello is not the type of domestic drama that appeals merely to our sense of pathos and satire but it arouses in us the true emotions of pity and terror. It is not the private life of married people that affects us in this tragedy, but the fate and fortune of true lovers turned tragic by the forces of evil embodied in Iago.

Conflict between Morality and Immorality in "Othello"

Shakespeare's drama 'Othello' is one of conflicting morals, ethics and values, and the consequences of these conflicts. Shakespeare focuses these conflicts on the character of Othello and his actions, which are the results of complex moral dilemmas. In Othello, societal influences are used as a catalyst to conflicting situations, and contribute to the character development of Othello and his actions. Through these factors, Shakespeare reveals the underlying theme of morality in conflict.

When pressured to select between two alternatives which both end negatively, the individual faces a conflict between morality and immorality, and their feelings and actions towards this conflict highlight the state of society. The quest for a moral resolution in Othello is a result and reflection of the 1570s society. Protagonist Othello is the great general of the Venetian Army, and during a majority of the duration of the play, is in Cyprus, Venice to fight the battle between the Turks. **"I swear 'tis better to be much abused, than but to know't a little"**.

Othello is in an **agonising state** of **jealousy** and **fury** after learning about his wife **Desdemona's** extra-marital affair, which is in fact a **false accusation** made by villain Iago. 'Ignorance is bliss' could be the most appropriate translation to what Othello wishes had stopped him from entering a moral conflict. Outraged by Desdemona's supposed act of infidelity, Othello decides that killing his wife would be the solution to eliminate the sources of evil in the world. To **eliminate evil, Othello commits evil**.

This is a classic example of morality trapped in a conflict of epic proportions, fuelled by the war-enraged society.

The crime which had been committed would seem considerably more outrageous now than it did in the era of Shakespeare's writing of Othello. This is due to Othello being set in Cyprus which was attacked by Turks in 1570, leading to the wars between Venice and Turkey. The exposure to mass killings and lingering misery in the overall atmosphere was a major catalyst to the loss of faith and morality in society. It was perhaps this change in social behaviour which had resulted in Othello being trapped in conflict, and being able to consider even the idea of murdering his own wife. In fact war was a major catalyst to morality being questioned in literature. In Othello, the characters view the explicit nature of the wars between Venice and Turkey, leading to immoral acts being committed even in the absence of negative intentions.

The character of Othello is also one which has been interestingly developed with the leverage of Othello's morals in conflict; killing the evil he sees in his wife Desdemona in the hope of 'cleaning out evil' in the world. Protagonist Othello is depicted not as a generic, fair-skinned perfectionist, but rather in a way which defies the physical norm for a "hero". Othello is Moorish, a descendant from Northern Africa, hence the colour of his skin. He is a man of great passion, and a physique suited to his title. However, we as an audience are instantly challenged by the portrayal of Othello, whose characteristics sway well away from those of a typical hero protagonist. Shakespeare attempts to question our morality. In the sixteenth century where racial equality was far from understood, a dark-skinned man is unquestionably deemed and given the same rights as an "average" but "higher status" citizen. This challenging portrayal of Othello is further challenged when he murders his wife. It is the "**hero**" of the play who commits the **inhumane** act, bringing forward the situation of a positive character facing confusion with a negative act, hence a moral dilemma. Shakespeare suggests that the character whose morals are in conflict is uncontrollable, performing overwhelmingly immoral acts.

The internal moral conflict faced by Othello can also be observed through his change of language throughout the play. Desdemona claims to have married Othello because of his ability to tell magnificent stories of his adventures, therefore it can be seen that Othello is very good with his words.

> **"But I love the gentle Desdemona,**
> **I would not my unhoused free condition**
> **Put into circumscription and confine**
> **For the sea's worth" (1.2.25-28)**

Othello's language at the beginning is very powerful and heroic as he compares the nature of his love for Desdemona with the treasures of the sea. The use of dramatic imagery of the sea is successful in depicting Othello's certainty and confidence in Desdemona's love. However, this certainty and confidence is long gone in the later stages of the play after Iago has corrupted Othello's faith by making him believe that Desdemona has been unfaithful. Othello no longer speaks with pride and wholesomeness; his language becomes uncertain and chaotic - **"O misery!", "O monstrous, monstrous!"** Shakespeare makes it clear that Othello is heavily weakened by the moral dilemma through his drastic change in language. This is the result of Othello being stuck between believing Desdemona and believing Iago. The two poles of morality in this situation are so extreme, i.e. killing Desdemona or letting Desdemona live but risking a tarnished reputation, that Othello becomes engulfed by the pressure. His strong language in the initial stages shows a strong natured man, and his incoherent remarks in the later stages are the outcome of a man who has been weakened by conflicting morality.

In Othello, Shakespeare reveals conflicting morals through the character of Othello. The aspects of the play which give rise to moral dilemmas are influences of society, the portrayal of Othello, and a change in Othello's behaviour through language. Shakespeare

combines these aspects to give the audience insight into deep conflicts of morality, both internal and external.

The Symbolic Meanings of the Handkerchief in 'Othello'

The handkerchief in William Shakespeare's 'Othello' is best-remembered as the damning, though circumstantial evidence of Desdemona's infidelity. Planted in Cassio's room by the scheming Iago, his possession of the handkerchief convinces Othello of Cassio's affair with Desdemona. Subsequently, Othello is driven mad by jealousy and murders his wife. In addition to this crucial function in the plot, the handkerchief serves as a powerful symbol with multiple meanings. The symbolic meaning of the handkerchief is changeable throughout the play and is dependent on the perspectives of the characters who exchange it. Although a seemingly trivial item, the many symbolic meanings of the handkerchief play an invaluable role in Othello.

As a gift given by Othello to Desdemona during their courtship, the initial symbolism of the handkerchief is love. For Othello, the handkerchief holds sentimental value because it had belonged to his mother, making the gift of it to Desdemona even more meaningful. The spirit of Othello's gift is not lost on Desdemona, and she always has the handkerchief in her possession "to kiss and talk to" (III.iii.296). The love Desdemona and Othello associate with the handkerchief leads Iago to covet it for use in his plot to ruin Othello.

The first mention of the handkerchief comes in Act III, when following a conversation with Iago, Othello complains of a headache. Desdemona produces the handkerchief and offers to bind his head, but Othello dismisses her efforts: "Your napkin is too little:" (III.iii.287). At this time, the handkerchief is fatefully dropped and lost, falling into the hands of Emilia. Because Emilia knows that her husband Iago wants the handkerchief, in her possession the handkerchief becomes a symbol of her husband's hard-won favor. Emilia gives the handkerchief to Iago who immediately implements it into his plan. With the handkerchief in his pocket, Iago plants further suspicion in Othello's mind when he claims that he saw it in Cassio's possession. Because of the special symbolism the handkerchief holds for Othello, Iago's allegation that Cassio had wiped his beard with the handkerchief serves to further embroil Othello's jealousy.

Moments prior to this conversation, Desdemona had attempted to bind Othello's head with the handkerchief, making Iago's story implausible. Had Othello recognized this inconsistency, Iago's deceit would have been revealed. However, Othello is blinded by his jealousy and taken in by Iago's manipulation. In this way, the handkerchief is symbolic of Othello's willingness to believe the lies and blindness to the truth. Othello sees the handkerchief only when it implicates Desdemona's guilt.

Iago's accusation concerning the handkerchief causes its transition from a token of love to a symbol of Desdemona's fidelity (or infidelity). Equating Desdemona's faithfulness with the tangible handkerchief, Othello asks her for it. When she admits she does not have it, Othello tells Desdemona that the handkerchief has been given to his mother by an Egyptian charmer. Othello goes on to tell Desdemona that the handkerchief has "magic in the web of it" and the embroidery of strawberries "(III. Iv. 69) was dyed in mummy which the skilfil/Conserv'd of maidens' hearts" (II.iv.74-75). Although Othello's story appears sincere, it is inconsistent with Othello's confession at the end of the tragedy that the handkerchief was "an antique token" (V.ii.216) given to his mother by his father.

The grisly mention of the embroidery being dyed with the mummified hearts of virgins is a metaphor for virginal blood and the handkerchief a metaphor for the wedding sheets. For Othello's mother, the handkerchief possessed the power to "subdue" (III.iv.59) his father "Entirely to her love" (III.iv.60), much as Desdemona's fidelity gives her power over Othello.

The handkerchief again changes hands when Iago plants the handkerchief in Cassio's room. The appearance of the handkerchief is a mystery to Cassio who gives it to the prostitute, Bianca to copy. As it does for Othello, the handkerchief inspires Bianca's jealousy and in her eyes a symbol of Cassio's infidelity: "O Cassio, whence came this?/This is some token from a newer friend" (III.vi.180-181). A later argument between Bianca and Cassio over the handkerchief is witnessed by Othello. Refusing to copy the work in the handkerchief, Bianca returns it to Cassio telling him: "This is some minx's token, and I must take/out the work? There; give it your hobby-horse: /wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't" (IV.i.153-155). Having witnessed this exchange, Othello is convinced Desdemona is the "minx" and "hobby-horse" Bianca refers to and plots the murder of his wife and Cassio.

The murder of Desdemona takes place in the bedchamber she shares with Othello. Keeping with the symbolism of the handkerchief, Emilia has made the bed with their wedding sheets as Desdemona requested. When Othello wakes and confronts the sleeping Desdemona, he throws several accusations at her, the worse of which is that she gave the handkerchief to Cassio. The weight of this accusation is found in the meaning of handkerchief to Othello - Desdemona's love and fidelity; both of which Othello believes Desdemona has given to Cassio.

After the death of Desdemona, the evidence that served to seal her fate ironically clears her name. When Emilia at last reveals the truth, the handkerchief becomes the evidence of Desdemona's innocence and the indictment of Iago's guilt:

> **O thou dull Moor! that handkerchief thou speak'st of**
> **I found by fortune and did give my husband;**
> **For often, with a solemn earnestness,**
> **More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle,**
> **He begg'd of me to steal it (V.ii.225-229).**

Emilia refers to the handkerchief as a "trifle" (V.ii.228). Emilia is pointing to the absurdity of murder over a handkerchief, but her choice of words is also ironic given the many complex and weighty meanings the handkerchief represents throughout the play: love, infidelity, jealousy, deceit and so forth. Although a seemingly inconsequential item, the handkerchief's many symbolic meanings are imperative to the execution of the plot and its tragic conclusion.

Starting out as a token of love, the handkerchief in William Shakespeare's Othello becomes the fabricated evidence of Desdemona's infidelity. Exchanging hands throughout the play, the handkerchief morphs again and again into different symbolic representations. In this manner, the handkerchief ceases to be the "trifle" Emilia deems it to be and becomes a central plot device. The symbolism attached to the handkerchief makes it indispensable to the execution of Othello and earns it its reputation as an item of infamy.

Dramatic Irony in Othello

In Othello, written by Shakespeare, dramatic irony is used to develop our understanding of characters in the play. Through soliloquies and asides, dramatic irony gives the audience knowledge and information that other characters do not have. This creates tension and suspense because the audience wonders if the truth will come out in time. In Othello, Iago’s soliloquies reveal his plans and also give us an understanding into his true nature that we would not get from his interactions with Othello. Through the soliloquy’s, we also learn how trusting and easily lead Othello is.

Dramatic irony is used to develop our understanding of Iago as a character, it reveals who he is, not the mask of an honest follower he puts up for Othello. Iago is a

Machiavellian character. A Machiavellian character is deceitful, expedient and cunning. They are clever and ruled by their goals. Machiavellian characters are quite common in Shakespeare's plays with Hamlet and Richard II from their eponymous works having the same characteristics as Iago. They are all out for themselves as exampled in Iago's own soliloquy: **"Others there are who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty, keep yet their hearts attending on themselves... and such a one I do profess myself."** In that passage, we learn that although Iago seems that he has a duty to someone, he is really only out for himself, so he can get somewhere in life. We learn of Iago's cunningness in another soliloquy: "After some time, to abuse Othello's ear that he is too familiar with his wife; he hath a person and a smooth dispose to be suspected, framed to make woman false." The audience learns of Iago's clever plan to destroy his enemies. This teaches the audience of Iago's deceitful nature.

As a true Machiavellian character, Iago is shown to be honest, reliable and people count on him for his opinions. But, as the audience learns through his soliloquies, he embodies the opposite of these qualities, which gives the play some dramatic irony. Here the audience is hoping that Othello can see his fault in relying and trusting in Iago before it is too late. The jealous part of Iago's complicated character is revealed to the audience when he divulges to us why he detests Michael Cassio and Othello. "**I hate the Moor, and it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets he's done my office. I know not if't be true yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind, will do as if for surety."** This shows the audience that Iago suspects Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia. Iago's jealousy is displayed when Iago admits that he doesn't know for sure if Othello has done what is rumoured but he will get back at him anyway in case it is true. The audience see that he doesn't have any sustainable evidence against Othello but he will accuse him of sleeping with his wife anyway. Iago also makes it clear of his jealousy for Cassio: **"Cassio's a proper man: let me see now; to get his place and to plume up my will in double knavery."** Iago wants Cassio's placing at lieutenant and believes he is better for the job. The audience can also see through this part of the soliloquy how depraved Iago is as he wants to "plume up my will", meaning he wants to have a little fun while destroying Cassio, showing us that this is a game to him and he gets enjoyment out of his plan. Through dramatic irony, we get an understanding of Iago's evil, deceitful and jealous character.

The audience also gets a deeper understanding of the character of Othello, the eponymous protagonist, through dramatic irony. We learn how trusting Othello is of others as he relies on his ensign Iago for advice and trusts him greatly. He mentions the words '**honest'** or '**honesty'** in relation to Iago over 50 times in the play. This shows the audience how assured he is that Iago is a reliable and reputable man. But what the audience knows that he doesn't is how corrupt and untrustworthy Iago is. Through dramatic irony we know that Iago, in fact, despises Othello and the audience discovers that Othello must be very trusting not to see or want to see through the mask of honesty and companionship that Iago shows Othello. Othello is also very easily led, despite his title as Army General. Because of his fatal flaw, jealousy, he chooses to see what he wants to see. This makes him easily manipulated by Iago into believing that Desdemona has cheated on him with Cassio. The audience knew that Desdemona had been faithful and saw how easily Othello was tricked into believing that she wasn't because of the weak evidence Iago gave him. "**but such a handkerchief- I am sure it was your wife's- did I today see Cassio wipe his beard with."** And Othello was quick to believe him: "**O that the slave had forty thousand lives! One is too poor, too**

weak, for my revenge. Now do I see 'tis true. Look here, Iago, All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven; 'Tis gone." Because of dramatic irony, we see how easily manipulated Othello is into believing what isn't true.

In Shakespeare's play Othello, dramatic irony creates an understanding of character. We get to understand how cunning, deceitful and jealous Iago really is while he is perceived to be very honest and trustworthy. Through dramatic irony, the audience also understands Othello as a character because we see how trusting and easily led he really is. Dramatic irony shows us parts of characters we would not get to see otherwise, through dialogue with other characters.

Stages of Iago's attempt to seduce Othello

Introduction: - Conventionally Morality drama has a temptation scene in which man is subjected to the Devil's allurements. The third act of Othello has a scene that corresponds to it. Othello is entangled in a situation where he must choose between the two, Iago's poisoning or his love for Desdemona. At the end of the scene, he is embraced by Iago in a spiritual union and Desdemona is ultimately rejected. He sees through the eyes of Iago. The tools and threads, with which he will weave his net, have already been prepared. Othello has not yet learnt to question and he will by the code of Iago and will be guided by him to the point of his devastation.

Credibility: - Although the temptation scene has been criticized as incredible, it is quite convincing in its dramatic context. Shakespeare's artistry infuses the scene with an illusion of reality which is remarkably effective in the theatre. The very speed of the action carries the audience along in Iago's spell and gives it no opportunity to consider questions of logical probability. Shakespeare has certainly provided certain elements in the first two acts which make seduction of Othello plausible. He has stressed his simple trust in Iago, his unfamiliarity with civilized life and particularly with Venetian women, his role as an alien ever potentially hostile society. Perhaps most significantly, by a series of events, Shakespeare has caused Othello to doubt his own powers of judgment and perception. His marriage to Desdemona has resulted in an accusation of witchcraft from one who has always been his friend. Cassio, the officer he has so carefully chosen, in his drunkenness has caused Othello to question the wisdom of his choice. Othello is now ready to question the goodness of Desdemona in which he had believed as firmly as in the friendship of Brabantio and the soldiership of Cassio.

Iago's Offensive: - Iago excites Othello's natural curiosity by his veiled remarks touching the honesty of Cassio and by the implication that he has secret knowledge which he will not reveal. There's no evidence of jealousy on Othello's part; however, until Iago himself raises the issue. O, beware, my lord, of jealousy. This suggestion Othello at first resists with the memory of Desdemona's virtue and with a true awareness of his own excellence for which she married him. Othello's awareness of how jealousy operates is in effect a rejection of jealousy. To this point of the scene, Iago has been unsuccessful. He has not been able to shake Othello's faith in himself and Desdemona. Now he turns to Othello's ignorance of Venus.

In Venus they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best
Conscience
Is not to leav't undone, but keep't unknown

Here Othello's belief is shaken and he tends to doubt whether the virtue of Venetian girls is a mask seeming virtue only and not the inner one for which he married Desdemona.

She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She lov'd them most.

Here, presenting the motifs of evil wearing the mask of apparent virtue, Iago is gains his first victory, for Othello is forced to reply ' **And so she did.'** It is Othello who first raises the question of Unnaturalness which had earlier been pleaded by Brabantio before the Venetian Council. He is now inseparably stuck to the point of unnaturalness and is drawn to the side of Iago. He is fully convinced of Iago's expertise in human psychology and dealing.

This fellow's of exceedings honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealing.

After this attack of Iago, his spiritual union with Desdemona appears to him only a sensual appetite and he begins to see things through the eyes of Iago.

Othello's Struggle: - There are moments in which, we find Othello breaking the net laid down by Iago. When Desdemona is before him, he finds her again the same beautiful and virtuous Venetian girl who saw Othello's visage in his mind and not in his face. He rejects all doubts attached to her by Iago and says,

If she false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
I'll not believe it.

But when she tries to bind his temples, he is overcome by the poison fed by Iago. His honour is at stake and he farewells the soldier's life. He says that he is ready to accept all evil attach to her; but hidden from him.

Othello's Surrender: - Although, Othello still demands proof, jealousy has so maddened him and benumbed his reason that he is willing to accept whatever proof and evidence, Iago has to present as truth. Iago's lie about Cassio's dream and his sensuous descriptions are all enough for Othello to dig his own grave. He renounces his love for Desdemona and accepts hatred and revenge. Iago's words have so worked upon him that Othello ends up with Desdemona as evil and Iago as his Lieutenant again and he even gives orders for the death of Cassio.

Othello's Delusion: - Despite the fact that Othello has allowed himself to be ensnared by Iago, there is awe and solemnity in the culmination of the surrender scene. Othello, in his delusion, would convert his sinful vengeance into the guise of a lawful justice and his hatred into duty. Truth will appear as falsehood, love and loyalty as lust and betrayal. Always in his delusion, Othello will see himself as the instrument of justice executing his duty his duty in a solemn ritual, although his court-room will be brothel and his act of justice the destruction of love and truth.

Iago : Evil Personified

William Shakespeare has always been known for creating notable characters, who through sheer will and perseverance greatly affect the structure of their respective story worlds; Iago is no exception. He is widely considered to be one of the most prolific

villains in all of Shakespeare's plays. Iago is not only one of the greatest villains of Shakespeare but also one of the cleverest. If Iago had used his incredible abilities for good, he would most likely be considered one of the greatest heroes in all of Shakespeare, instead of the greatest villain. However, this is not the path he chooses.

Iago is considered to be one of the greatest Shakespearean villains because he uses his **incredible logic** to **deceive many characters** in the play, his goals never change no matter how many times his motives might, and he does not stop until everyone in his way has been eliminated.

Without a doubt, Iago possesses a gift: the **ability to instantly assess any situation** he is in and then **adapt to the situation to twist it in his favor**, thus being able to deceive anyone without much trouble. This skill is first revealed in his first soliloquy:

"After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are" (1.3. 338-445).

Iago hadn't already thoroughly organized his revenge at this point. He was only beginning to plot. He exhibits masterful thinking by devising a plan to destroy Othello on the spot. His goal quickly becomes to bring Cassio's affection towards Desdemona to light. The realization that Cassio is a perfect target of Othello's jealousy only furthers Iago's enthusiasm. He understands that Cassio is a well-spoken and handsome gentleman, and it would seem completely natural that Desdemona would fall for him.

Then Iago makes a crucial **discovery**: **Othello's weakness**. Othello is straightforward and never thinks twice about what he believes. Iago thinks that because Othello trusts men that seem honest without question, he can easily befriend him with his ability to deceive. After Iago has spoken to Othello about Cassio and Desdemona, he has another revelation and delivers yet another soliloquy:

"will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ. This may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison.
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood
Burn like the mines of sulfur" (3.3. 369-377).

His objective here is to cause Cassio to believe that Desdemona has feelings for him. When more than one person is deceived, the truth is much harder to find. Othello wouldn't be able to detect a lie because Cassio was well convinced as well; the one person Othello believes could reveal the truth doesn't even know the truth himself. Iago knew that if Othello hadn't already been jealous, the handkerchief would not have been a successful endeavor. However, Iago points out here that the smallest thing to a jealous man can blow up in his face, leaving him scarred with hatred.

Iago is pure evil because once he loses his main motive for revenge he continues the path of destruction anyway. He begins the play jealous of Cassio because Othello promoted Cassio to Lieutenant instead of him. Iago then goes about getting Cassio drunk so that he will be seen as unfit as a Lieutenant (2.3. 40-43). Once Othello had demoted him, Iago's quest for revenge should have stopped there. Instead, Iago decides to ruin Othello. He also goes about ruining Desdemona and Cassio even further. Iago seems to be having too much fun with himself to stop at this point. He leads Othello on and convinces him that his wife is cheating on him (4.1. 190-196). This ruins Desdemona's reputation to Othello as being pure and faithful. Desdemona will eventually be ruined beyond repair when a jealous Othello finally murders her. Iago apparently didn't have enough with Cassio once he had gotten him demoted. Iago brings Cassio aside within earshot of a hidden Othello as he gets him to "admit" to sleeping with Desdemona. He is actually talking about Bianca when he says,

"I marry her! What? A customer? Prithee bear
some charity to my wit. Do not think it so unwhole-
some. Ha, ha, ha!" (4.1. 138-140).

He calls Bianca a whore, but Othello believes that he is talking about Desdemona. So not only does Othello believe that Cassio has slept with Desdemona, he also thinks that Cassio doesn't even respect her so he would turn around and cheat on her as well. He then vows to kill Cassio.

Iago plans to eliminate all opposition. Othello approaches Iago and says,

"How shall I murder him,
Iago?" (4.1. 188-189).

Othello is willing to get rid of Cassio for Iago. Othello also plots to kill Desdemona. Othello gives the task of murdering Cassio to Iago who then gives the task to his loyal and naïve friend Roderigo. Roderigo fails and is killed by Cassio, but Iago stabs Cassio and flees without being seen. When Othello tells Desdemona that Cassio has been killed, she weeps for him: "**Alas, he is betrayed, and I undone"** (5.2. 96), which is the last straw and Othello makes up his mind. He then smothers her to death. Emilia begins to realize what is going on and tells Othello that Iago only spoke of lies. To shut her up, Iago stabs her; he kills his own wife. Only true evil could possess someone to kill their own wife only to preserve their own self-image.

There is no character more evil than Iago. He will do anything and everything to get what he wants and he does not care who he hurts in the process. He also has basically no motive for the majority of the play. He might've realized that what he was doing reached a point where it no longer had a meaning, but he simply shrugs his shoulders as if to say, **"I might as well finish what I started".** This mentality when incorporated with jealousy can only stem from a truly evil and disturbed man.

The Importance of Being Ernest

OSCAR WILDE; 1854-1900

Oscar Wilde, celebrated playwright and literary provocateur, was born in Dublin on October 16, 1854. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford before settling in London. During his days at Dublin and Oxford, he developed a set of attitudes and postures for which he would eventually become famous. Chief among these were his flamboyant style of dress, his contempt for conventional values, and his belief in aestheticism—a movement that embraced the principle of art for the sake of beauty and beauty alone. After a stunning performance in college, Wilde settled in London in 1878, where he moved in circles that included Lillie Langtry, the novelists Henry James and George Moore, and the young William Butler Yeats.

Literary and artistic acclaim were slow in coming to Wilde. In 1884, when he married Constance Lloyd, Wilde's writing career was still a work in progress. He had gone on a lecture tour of North America and been lampooned in the 1881 Gilbert and Sullivan operetta Patience as the self-consciously idiosyncratic philosopher-poet Reginald Bunthorne, but he was celebrated chiefly as a well-known personality and a wit. He may have been the first person ever to become famous for being famous.

During the late 1880s, Wilde wrote reviews, edited a women's magazine, and published a volume of poetry and one of children's stories. In 1891, his only novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, appeared and was attacked as scandalous and immoral. In that same year, he met Lord Alfred Douglas, who would eventually become his lover, and Wilde finally hit his literary stride. Over the next few years, he wrote four plays: Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman of No Importance, An Ideal Husband, and The Importance of Being Earnest.

Lady Windermere's Fan and A Woman of No Importance enjoyed successful runs in the West End in 1892 and 1893, respectively. An Ideal Husband opened in January 1895, but it was The Importance of Being Earnest, which opened a month later, that is regarded by many as Oscar Wilde's masterpiece. Its first performance at the St. James's Theater on February 14, 1895 came at the height of Wilde's success as a popular dramatist. Wilde was finally the darling of London society, a position he had striven for years to attain.

In many ways, The Importance of Being Earnest was an artistic breakthrough for Wilde, something between self-parody and a deceptively flippant commentary on the dramatic genre in which Wilde had already had so much success. Wilde's genre of choice was the Victorian melodrama, or "sentimental comedy," derived from the French variety of "well-made play" popularized by Scribe and Sardou. In such plays, fallen women and abandoned children of uncertain parentage figure prominently, letters cross and recross the stage, and dark secrets from the past rise to threaten the happiness of seemingly respectable, well-meaning characters. In Wilde's hands, the form of Victorian melodrama became something else entirely. Wilde introduced a new character to the genre, the figure of the "dandy" (a man who pays excessive attention to his appearance). This figure added a moral texture the form had never before possessed. The character of the dandy was heavily autobiographical and often a stand-in for Wilde himself, a witty, overdressed, self-styled philosopher who speaks in epigrams and paradoxes, ridicules the cant and hypocrisy of society's moral arbiters, and self-deprecatingly presents himself as trivial, shallow, and ineffectual. In fact, the dandy in these plays always proves to be deeply moral and essential to the happy resolution of the plot.

The Importance of Being Earnest was an early experiment in Victorian melodrama. Part satire, part comedy of manners, and part intellectual farce, this play seems to have

nothing at stake because the world it presents is so blatantly and ostentatiously artificial. Below the surface of the light, brittle comedy, however, is a serious subtext that takes aim at self-righteous moralism and hypocrisy, the very aspects of Victorian society that would, in part, bring about Wilde's downfall.

During 1895, however, a series of catastrophes stemming from Wilde's relationship with Lord Alfred, also a poet, led to personal humiliation and social, professional, and financial ruin. On February 28, 1895, two weeks after The Importance of Being Earnest's opening night, Lord Alfred's belligerent, homophobic father, the Marquess of Queensberry, publicly accused Wilde of "posing as a somdomite." The nobleman meant "sodomite," of course, an insulting and potentially defamatory term for a homosexual. Queensberry had for some time been harassing Wilde with insulting letters, notes, and confrontations and had hoped to disrupt the opening night of The Importance of Being Earnest with a public demonstration, which never took place. Against the advice of his friends, Wilde sued for libel and lost. Wilde probably should have fled the country, as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 had made homosexual acts punishable by up to two years' imprisonment. However, Wilde chose to stay and was arrested. Despite information about Wilde's private life and writings that emerged at the trial, the prosecution initially proved unsuccessful. However, Wilde was tried a second time, convicted, and sentenced to prison for two years.

Wilde may have remained in England for a number of reasons, including self-destructiveness, denial, desperation, and a desire for martyrdom. However, some historians have suggested that Wilde's relentless persecution by the government was a diversionary tactic. Lord Alfred's older brother was reportedly also having a homosexual affair with Archibald Philip Primrose, Lord Rosebery, the man who would become prime minister. Queensberry was apparently so outraged that he threatened to disclose the relationship, and the government reacted by punishing Wilde and his lover in an effort to assuage the marquess. In any case, Wilde served his full sentence under conditions of utmost hardship and cruelty. Following his release from prison, his health and spirit broken, he sought exile in France, where he lived out the last two years of his life in poverty and obscurity under an assumed name. He died in Paris in 1900.

For sixty or seventy years after Wilde's death, critics and audiences regarded The Importance of Being Earnest as a delightful but utterly frivolous and superficial comedy, a view that partly reflects the mindset of a period in which homosexuality remained a guarded topic. The decriminalization of homosexuality in England in 1967 and the emergence in American of an interest in gay culture, and particularly in the covert homosexual literature of the past, has made it possible to view the play in a different light. The play's danger and subversion are easier to see from a twenty-first-century perspective. In the ambiguity over exactly what people refer to when they speak of "wicked" or immoral behavior, we can detect a system of coded references to homosexuality, just as we can infer a more general comment on the hypocrisy of late Victorian society.

Five Major Types of Comedy

The main trends of English comedy can broadly be classified into Five groups, namely 'romantic comedy', 'comedy of manners', 'comedy of hunours', 'sentimental comedy' and the 'tragi-comedy' or 'dark comedy'.

Romantic Comedy

The term 'romantic comedy' is a somewhat vague appellation, which denotes a form of drama is which love is the main theme and love leads to a happy ending. The team 'romantic comedy' is generally applied to plays developed by Shakespeare and some of his Elizabethan contemporaries. These plays are generally concerned with love affairs that involve a beautiful and idealized heroine; the course of this love does not run smooth, but ultimately overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. In the Anatomy of Criticism (P.P 182-183) Northrop Frye points out that some of Shakespeare romantic comedies involve a movement from the normal world of conflict and trouble into the 'green world' – the idyllic, pastoral world of the Forest of Arden as in As You Like It, on the fairy haunted wood of A Midsummer Night's Dream – in which the problems and troubles of the real world are magically dissolved, enemies reconciled and true lovers united. Frye regards this phenomenon (together with other aspects of these comedies, such as their festive conclusion in the social – ritual of a wedding, a feast, a dance) as evidence that comic plots reflect Primitive myths and rituals celebrating the victory of spring over winter.

Comedy of Humours

Another important type of English comedy, conceived and pupularised by Ben Jonson, is the 'comedy of Humours'. The word 'humours' refers to bodily fluids to which medieval medicine attributed to the various types of human temperament according to the predominance of each within the body. Thus a preponderance of blood would make a person 'sanguine', while excess of phlegm would make him or her 'plegmatic', too much choler (yellow bile) would produce a melancholy one. In Jonson is 'Comedy of Humours' each of the major characters instead of being a well-balanced individual, has preponderant humour that gives him a characteristic distortion or eccentricity of disposition. Jonson expounds in his theory in the 'Introduction' to the play Every Man In his Humour (1598) and exemplifies the mode in his later comedies as well. Jonson himself wrote in his 'Introduction' to Every Man Out of his Humour:

> As when some one particular quality
>
> Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
>
> All his affects, his spirits, and his power
>
> In their confluxions, all to run way,
>
> This may be truly said to be a humour.

For example in Every Man in his Humour, the rich merchant kitely has a young and pretty wife, of whom he is madly jealous; jealously is his humour, the passion that rules has whole life, the young hero's father, Old Knowell, is always worried about his son's safety; anxiety is his humour; captain Bobadill is the talkative but cowardly old soldier; boastfulness is his humour. In Bartholomew Fair, Jonson shows us how the humours of various types Londoners are taken advantage of by the quick witted market people.

Comedy of Manners

The Phrase 'Comedy of manners' is particularly applied in English to the plays of the Restoration dramatists, and especially to Congreve (1670 – 1729) and Wycherley (1640-1716), but is a type of comedy which can flourish in any civilized urban society and we see it again in Sheridan (1751-1816) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). The 'comedy of manners' was early exemplified by Shakespeare's Love's Labour Lost and Much Ado

About Nothing. This form deals with the relations and intrigues of gentlemen and ladies living in a sophisticated society. It relies upon comic effect in great part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogues, and to a certain degree, on the ridiculous violations of social conventions and decorum by stupid characters such as would be wives, jealous husbands, foppish dandies. Excellent examples are Congreve's The Way of The World, Wycherley's The Country Wife. The main thrust in The 'comedy of Manners' is to make fun not so much of individual human being as of social groups and their fashionable manner. It is generally more or less satirical, though in a good-natured way. It is how ever a highly artificial drama, full of verbal with and sometimes inclined to be cynical and hard. This type of comedy was revived in the 18th century by Goldsmith (She stoops to Conquer) and Sheridan's The school for scandals and The Rivals). In the turn of the 19th century, Oscar Wilde rejuvenated this form of comedy in plays like The Importance of Being Earnest and Lady Winter Mere's Fan.

Sentimental Comedy

A middleclass reaction against the immortality of situation and the frequent indecency of dialogue in the rise of the 'sentimental comedy' of the 18th century. Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) protested against the permissiveness of the 'comedy of manners' specially those of Congreve and Vanbrugh, and wrote his treatise entitled Short View of The Immortality and Profaneness of The English Stage. One result of this was the appearance of the new 'sentimental comedy'. This form achieved some popularity with respectable middle-class audiences of the 18th century. It showed virtue rewarded by domestic bliss; its plots usually involved unbelievably good middle-class couple and emphasized pathos rather than humour. Pioneered by Richard Steele in The Funeral (1710) and more fully in The Concious Lovers (1722), it flourished in the mid-century with the French comedia larmoyonete (Tearful comedy) and in such plays as Huge Kelly's False Delicacy (1768). The pious moralizing of this tradition also involved an element of preaching as a result of which the entertainment values of these plays was reduced.

Tragi-Comedy

There are many plays which do not totally subscribe to the spirit of comedy, nor do they embody the tragic emotions. In parts, they may be cheerful but they point to some darker aspects of life as well. But generally these plays are also classified as comedies. Shakespeare's Measure for Measure and Eliot's The Cocktail Party, for example, might both be called comedies but they have very little in common with the main stream of the English comedies. To these plays, the term 'tragi-comedy' or 'black comedy' or 'dark comedy' have been applied. Shakespeare's later plays like The Winter's Tale and Cymbeline are 'tragi-comedies' with the pattern of sudden release from delay danger involved in the sudden release from delay danger involved in the plots. In modern drama, the term black comedy is often used to describe a kind of drama in which disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare are treated with bitter amusements usually in a manner calculated to offend and stock. Prominent in the 'Theatre of The Absurd', 'black comedy' is best represented in Beckett's Happy Days and Joe Orton's The Loot.

Historical Background to The Importance of Being Earnest

The Importance of Being Earnest is first and foremost a farce, a comedy of manners whose main goal is to amuse the audience, rather than to make them think. As a

comedy, it is rooted much less in a specific history or place than many plays. Nevertheless, the play does contain a few references to contemporary historical events, which suggest a troubled society underneath the glossiness of the characters that Wilde portrays. One of the primary critiques of Wilde's play is that it is form without content, and does not deal seriously with any social issues (this, of course, is consistent with Wilde's doctrine of Aestheticism). In a contemporary review, the socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw reacted to The Importance of Being Earnest's seeming heartlessness--he would prefer to think that people are capable of speaking something other than nonsense.

However, some of the topics mentioned briefly in the play indicate larger political issues that were the subject of heated debate at the time that it was produced. One such subject was the issue of Home Rule for Ireland. William Gladstone created a controversy in 1886 when he committed the British Liberal party to support Home Rule--self-governance for Ireland within the framework of the British Empire. A contentious Home Rule Bill was suppressed by the House of Lords only two years before the production of the Importance of Being Earnest. As Lady Bracknell examines Jack's suitability as a partner for Gwendolen, she inquires about his politics. Jack is a Liberal Unionist, meaning that he is a Liberal who does not support Home Rule. Lady Bracknell appears relieved, saying: "Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us." The political distinction matters only insomuch as it affects Lady Bracknell's social engagements, rather than having to do with the right or wrong of Home Rule for Ireland.

The only reason for Wilde's characters to get incensed about politics is if politics threaten to disturb their hedonistic lifestyle or the social hierarchy that they have grown comfortable with. The threat of a revolution like the French revolution continuously hangs over British society. Lady Bracknell is exceedingly alarmed to hear that the imaginary Bunbury died by explosion. "Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity." Her unease reflects a general feeling of fear regarding social unrest in the 1890s, particularly after a working-class riot in Trafalgar Square in 1885. The word morbidity does well to describe Wilde's characters' attitudes toward politics. It is difficult for them to understand an interest in something that is so far removed from their daily pleasures.

In last analysis, it is unfair to suggest that The Importance of Being Earnest is a shallow, universal farce which has no ties to the historical context in which it was created; however, Wilde's references to the crucial issues of his time are usually overshadowed by his characters' own petty concerns.

Character Map

The Importance of Being Earnest ; Play Summary

The play begins in the flat of wealthy Algernon Moncrieff (Algy) in London's fashionable West End. Algernon's aunt (Lady Bracknell) and her daughter (Gwendolen Fairfax) are coming for a visit, but Mr. Jack Worthing (a friend of Algy's) arrives first. Algernon finds it curious that Jack has announced himself as "Ernest." When Jack explains that he plans to propose marriage to Gwendolen, Algy demands to know why Jack has a cigarette case with the inscription, "From little Cecily with her fondest love." Jack explains that his real name is Jack Worthing, squire, in the country, but he assumes the name "Ernest" when he ventures to the city for fun. Cecily is his ward. While devouring all the cucumber sandwiches, Algernon confesses that he, too, employs deception when it's convenient. He visits an imaginary invalid friend named Bunbury when he needs an excuse to leave the city.

Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen arrive. Algernon explains that he cannot attend Lady Bracknell's reception because he must visit his invalid friend, Bunbury, but he offers to arrange the music for her party. While Algernon distracts Lady Bracknell in another room, Jack proposes to Gwendolen. Unfortunately, she explains that she really wants to marry someone named Ernest because it sounds so solidly aristocratic. However, she accepts his proposal, and he makes a mental note to be rechristened Ernest. Lady Bracknell returns and refutes the engagement. She interrogates Jack and finds him

lacking in social status. On her way out, Lady Bracknell tells Jack that he must find some acceptable parents. Gwendolen returns for Jack's address in the country. Algernon overhears and writes the address on his shirt cuff. He is curious about Cecily and decides to go "bunburying" in the country.

In the second act, the scene shifts to Jack Worthing's country estate where Miss Prism, Cecily Cardew's governess, is teaching Cecily in the garden. Miss Prism sings Jack's praises as a sensible and responsible man, unlike his brother Ernest, who is wicked and has a weak character. She teaches Cecily that good people end happily, and bad people end unhappily, according to the romantic novel Miss Prism wrote when she was young. The local vicar, Canon Chasuble, arrives and, sensing an opportunity for romance, takes Miss Prism for a walk in the garden. While they are gone, Algy shows up pretending to be Jack's wicked brother Ernest. He is overcome by Cecily's beauty. Determined to learn more about Cecily while Jack is absent, Algernon plans to stay for the weekend, then make a fast getaway before Jack arrives on Monday. However, Jack returns early in mourning clothes claiming that his brother Ernest has died in Paris. He is shocked to find Algy there posing as Ernest. He orders a dogcart — a small horse-drawn carriage — to send Algy back to London, but it is too late. Algernon is in love with Cecily and plans to stay there. When Jack goes out, Algernon proposes to Cecily, who gets out a diary and letters that she has already written, explaining that she had already imagined their engagement. She has always wanted to marry someone named Ernest, so Algy, like Jack, needs to arrange a rechristening.

Just when it seems that Jack and Algernon couldn't get into worse trouble, Gwendolen arrives, pursuing Jack, and discovers that his ward, Cecily, is unpleasantly beautiful. In conversation, they discover that they are both engaged to Ernest Worthing. A battle follows, cleverly carried out during the British tea ceremony. The situation is tense. Jack and Algernon arrive, and, in attempting to straighten out the Ernest problem, they alienate both women. The two men follow, explaining that they are going to be rechristened Ernest, and the women relent and agree to stay engaged.

Lady Bracknell shows up demanding an explanation for the couples' plans. When she discovers the extent of Cecily's fortune, she gives her consent to her engagement to Algernon; however, Jack's parentage is still a stumbling block to her blessings. Jack tells Lady Bracknell that he will not agree to Cecily's engagement until she is of age (35) unless he can marry Gwendolen. Dr. Chasuble arrives and announces that all is ready for the christenings. Jack explains that the christenings will no longer be necessary. Noting that Jack's present concerns are secular, the minister states that he will return to the church where Miss Prism is waiting to see him. Shocked at hearing the name "Prism," Lady Bracknell immediately calls for Prism and reveals her as the governess who lost Lady Bracknell's nephew 28 years earlier on a walk with the baby carriage. She demands to know where the baby is. Miss Prism explains that in a moment of distraction she placed the baby in her handbag and left him in Victoria Station, confusing him with her three-volume novel, which was placed in the baby carriage. After Jack asks for details, he quickly runs to his room and retrieves the handbag. Miss Prism identifies it, and Lady Bracknell reveals that Jack is Algernon's older brother, son of Ernest John Moncrieff, who died years ago in India. Jack now truly is Ernest, and Algernon/Cecily, Jack/Gwendolen, and Chasuble/Prism fall into each others' arms as Jack realizes the importance of being earnest.

The Importance of Being Earnest : Literary Analysis

At the 1895 opening of Oscar Wilde's most famous play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," the audience was liberally sprinkled with well-dressed young men wearing green carnations, Wilde's approved symbol for his gay followers. These patrons knew the play, an essay in appearances and secrets, was also written in code for gay men, starting with the title itself.

By common consent, then and after, "The Importance of Being Earnest" is Wilde's masterpiece. Its title is meant as a double-entendre. The protagonist, called Jack in the country and Ernest in town, is chasing a young lady who will only marry a man named Ernest because she desires the quality of being earnest above all others in her future husband. The play's second half revolves around attempts by not one but two characters to be christened officially with that same name as part of their frenzied skirt-chasing.

The boys in green carnations knew that "earnest" was also gay code for homosexual. If you were lunching at the Savoy Grill and wanted to nail someone's sexual identity, you quietly asked, "Is he earnest?" This converts a double-entendre to a triple one, and decoding the play further will open up delicious new meanings.

Two books enable us to do this decoding. Richard Ellmann's 1987 biography "Oscar Wilde" (Vintage paperback) is not only definitive; all Wilde studies coming after were based squarely on it. Another book approaches from a sleazier angle: Theo Aronson's "Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld" (Barnes & Noble Books, 1994) chronicles the play culture of London's gay men of that time with its elaborate system of protected spaces and passwords. Chapter Eight of Karl Beckson's "London in the 1890s: A Cultural History" (Norton, 1992) adds still more detail. All of this was dramatized effectively in the 1997 film "Wilde."

Fortunately, Ernest can be seen, not simply read, in a definitive version that discreetly clarifies the play's text: Anthony Asquith's 1952 British film with Michael Redgrave, Edith Evans, and Margaret Rutherford, available on DVD. Here is decoding companion to that film.

The Albany: Asquith departs from the text by starting the story in Jack Worthing's apartment in The Albany, only then moving to his rakish friend Algernon's apartment. This is significant. The Albany was the best known and most prestigious set of bachelor apartments in London, close enough to Piccadilly Circus that management discreetly marketed their willingness to allow well-off male tenants to bring home male prostitutes acquired nearby-until, that is, Wilde's trial exposed vices that caused a panicked scramble to suppress such tolerance. In an early draft of the play, Miss Prism talks about one character who is "as bad as any young man who has chambers in the Albany, or indeed even in the vicinity of Piccadilly, can possibly be." Oscar's gay friend George Ives threw parties in apartment E4.

The silver cigarette case: Algernon has come to return Jack's silver cigarette case. This is how well-off gay men paid their male prostitutes to avoid prosecution; favorites even got their names engraved inside. The cases, of course, could be pawned for far more than the cash value of the services. But despite this precaution, the customer could still be blackmailed, and Wilde flirted with blackmailers regularly.

Bunbury: Whenever his Aunt Augusta required Algernon to perform some dull social service, Algie's imaginary friend Bunbury became ill or disconsolate in ways that required Algie's urgent attention. Bunbury, of course, was the English equivalent of bone-smuggling, and Algie certainly preferred bun-burying to dining with his aunt. Wilde also had a classmate by that name.

Cecily: the name of Jack Worthing's young ward, cloistered carefully in his country house, protected by her governess Miss Prism from the corrupting influence of guys like Algernon, who of course spends most of the play chasing her. Cecily is also gay slang for a kept boy, especially one kept away from the prying eyes of other gay men.

Watching Asquith's version we see that the theme of a double life is played out with all the key characters, just as it played out in Wilde's life right after the play opened. Wilde was bullied by his unstable boyfriend, Lord Alfred Douglas, to sue Douglas' father for libel. In the play, Victorian notions of wickedness are parodied as being trivial, but the vices revealed by Wilde in his court testimony were enough to ruin him. Another Wilde play, "An Ideal Husband," which also played to packed houses at the same time as "Earnest," is actually Wilde's essay on blackmail. Both plays closed after Wilde was arrested. His own double life, which everyone earnestly wished him to conceal, finally caught up with him. Hypocrisy had its revenge.

The Importance of Being Earnest : Themes

Duty and Respectability: - The aristocratic Victorians valued duty and respectability above all else. Earnestness — a determined and serious desire to do the correct thing — was at the top of the code of conduct. Appearance was everything, and style was much more important than substance. So, while a person could lead a secret life, carry on affairs within marriage or have children outside of wedlock, society would look the other way as long as the appearance of propriety was maintained. For this reason, Wilde questions whether the more important or serious issues of the day are overlooked in favor of trivial concerns about appearance. Gwendolen is the paragon of this value. Her marriage proposal must be performed correctly, and her brother even practices correct proposals. Gwendolen's aristocratic attitude is "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing." The trivial is important; the serious is overlooked.

The tea ceremony in Act II is a hilarious example of Wilde's contention that manners and appearance are everything. The guise of correctness is the framework for war. Both women, thinking they are engaged to the same person, wage a civilized "war" over the tea service while the servants silently watch. When Gwendolen requests no sugar, Cecily adds four lumps to her cup. Although she asks for bread and butter, Gwendolen is given a large slice of cake. Her true feelings come out only in an aside that Cecily supposedly cannot hear: "Detestable girl!" Gwendolen is also appalled to find that Cecily is living in Jack's country home, and she inquires about a chaperone. Wilde gives examples again and again of the aristocrat's concern for propriety, that everything is done properly no matter what those good manners might be camouflaging.

The Absence of Compassion**: -** Two areas in which the Victorians showed little sympathy or compassion were illness and death. When Lady Bracknell hears that Bunbury died after his doctors told him he could not live, she feels he has — in dying — acted appropriately because he had the correct medical advice. "Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life." Lady Bracknell, like other aristocrats, is too busy worrying about her own life, the advantages of her daughter's marriage, and her nephew's errors in judgment to feel any compassion for others. Gwendolen, learning from her mother, is totally self-absorbed and definite about what she wants. She tells Cecily, "I never travel without my diary. One should have something sensational to read in the train." Wilde seems to be taking to task a social class that thinks only of itself, showing little compassion or sympathy for the trials of those less fortunate.

Religion**: -** Another serious subject — religion — is also a topic of satire. While concerns of the next world would be an appropriate topic for people of this world, it seems to be shoved aside in the Victorian era. Canon Chasuble is the symbol of religious thought, and Wilde uses him to show how little the Victorians concerned themselves with attitudes reflecting religious faith. Chasuble can rechristen, marry, bury, and encourage at a moment's notice with interchangeable sermons filled with meaningless platitudes. Even Lady Bracknell mentions that christenings are a waste of time and, especially, money. Chasuble's pious exterior betrays a racing pulse for Miss Prism: "Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips." Quickly correcting his error, the minister hides his hardly holy desires in the language of metaphor. Wilde's satire here is gentle and humorous, chiding a society for its self-importance.

Popular Culture**: -** The popular attitudes of the day about the French, literary criticism, and books are also subjects of Wilde's humor. Wilde wittily asserts that Victorians believe that nothing good comes from France, except for (in Wilde's mind) the occasional lesbian maid. Otherwise, France is a good place to kill off and request the burial of Ernest. As the good reverend says, "I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last." Literary criticism is for "people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers." Modern books are filled with truths that are never pure or simple, and scandalous books should be read but definitely in secret. Again Wilde criticizes the Victorians for believing that appearance is much more important than truth. He takes the opportunity to insert many examples of popular thought, revealing bias, social bigotry, thoughtlessness and blind assumptions.

Secret Lives**: -** Because Victorian norms were so repressive and suffocating, Wilde creates episodes in which his characters live secret lives or create false impressions to express who they really are. Jack and Algernon both create personas to be free. These other lives allow them to neglect their duties — in Algernon's case — or to leave their duties and pursue pleasure — in Jack's case. Very early in Act I, Wilde sets up these secret lives, and they follow through until the final act. When Jack and Algernon realize their marriages will end their pursuit of pleasure, they both admit rather earnestly, "You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy," and "You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was." Marriage means the end of freedom, pleasure, wickedness, and the beginning of duty and doing what is expected. Of course, Jack and Algernon could continue to don their masks after they marry Gwendolen and Cecily, but they will have to be cautious and make sure society is looking the other way.

Passion and Morality**: -** Wilde's contention that a whole world exists separate from Victorian manners and appearances is demonstrated in the girlish musings of Cecily. When she hears that Jack's "wicked" brother Ernest is around, she is intensely desirous of meeting him. She says to Algernon, "I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time." The thought of meeting someone who lives outside the bounds of prudery and rules is exciting to naïve Cecily. Even using the name Ernest for his secret life is ironic because Algernon is not being dutiful — earnest — in living a secret life.

Various characters in the play allude to passion, sex and moral looseness. Chasuble and Prism's flirting and coded conversations about things sexual, Algernon stuffing his face to satisfy his hungers, the diaries (which are the acceptable venues for passion), and Miss Prism's three-volume novel are all examples of an inner life covered up by suffocating rules. Even Algernon's aesthetic life of posing as the dandy, dressing with studied care,

neglecting his bills, being unemployed, and pursuing pleasure instead of duty is an example of Victorians valuing trivialities. Once Algernon marries he will have suffocating rules and appearances to keep up. Wilde's characters allude to another life beneath the surface of Victorian correctness. Much of the humor in this play draws a fine line between the outer life of appearances and the inner life of rebellion against the social code that says life must be lived earnestly.

Courtship and Marriage**: -** Oscar Wilde felt these Victorian values were perpetuated through courtship and marriage, both of which had their own rules and rituals. Marriage was a careful selection process. When Algernon explains that he plans to become engaged to Jack's ward, Cecily, Lady Bracknell decides, "I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place." When Lady Bracknell pummels Jack with questions about parents, politics, fortune, addresses, expectations, family solicitors, and legal encumbrances, his answers must be proper and appropriate for a legal union between the two families to be approved. Fortune is especially important, and when Jack and Cecily's fortunes are both appropriate, the next problem is family background. Because Jack does not know his parents, Lady Bracknell suggests he find a parent — any with the right lineage will do — and find one quickly. Appearance, once again, is everything. Duty (not joy, love or passion) is important, further substantiating Algy's contention that marriage is a loveless duty: "A man who marries without knowing Bunbury [an excuse for pleasure] has a very tedious time of it." Marriage is presented as a legal contract between consenting families of similar fortunes; background, love, and happiness have little to do with it.

Perpetuating the Upper Class**: -** The strict Victorian class system, in which members of the same class marry each other, perpetuates the gulf between the upper, middle and lower classes. Snobbish, aristocratic attitudes further preserve the distance between these groups. Jack explains to Lady Bracknell that he has no politics. He considers himself a Liberal Unionist. Lady Bracknell finds his answer satisfactory because it means that he is a Tory, or a conservative. Jack's home in London is on the "unfashionable side" of Belgrave Square, so "that could easily be altered." When Jack inquires whether she means the "unfashionable" or the side of the street, Lady Bracknell explains, "Both, if necessary." The French Revolution is held up as an example of what happens when the lower class is taught to question its betters. Education is not for learning to think; it is for mindlessly following convention. Lady Bracknell approves of ignorance. In fact, she explains, "The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square." Thinking causes discontent, and discontent leads to social revolution. That simply will not do.

Class Conflict**: -** One might think aristocrats would see the error of their ways and try to be more virtuous in a moral sense. However, they see their attitudes as the virtuous high ground and believe that other classes should conform to aristocratic attitudes and see the error of their own ways. When Miss Prism seems to chide the lower classes for producing so many children for Chasuble to christen, she appears to see it as a question of thrift. "I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject [of christenings]. But they don't seem to know what thrift is." Chasuble speaks humorously of the penchant of the aristocracy to dabble in good causes that do not disrupt their own lives too much. He mentions a sermon he gave for the Society for the Prevention of Discontent Among the Upper Orders. To the Victorians, reform means keeping the current social and economic system in place by perpetuating upper-class virtues and economy.

Every page, every line of dialogue, every character, each symbol, and every stage direction in The Importance of Being Earnest is bent on supporting Wilde's contention that social change happens as a matter of thoughtfulness. Art can bring about such thoughtfulness. If the eccentric or unusual is to be replaced with correct behavior and thought, human sympathy and compassion suffer. If strict moral values leave no room for question, a society loses much of what is known as humanity.

Love and Marriage: Perspectives from Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Ernest

Oscar Wilde was a self-described antinomian (p. 1807), one for whom the regular rules for society didn't apply. The fact, therefore that he should have written The Importance of Being Ernest, is not at all surprising.

The Importance of Being Ernest is a cleverly woven satire in which many of the rules, morays, and hypocritical practices and ideas of Wilde's day were made a mockery. In an interview, Wilde was quoted as saying in reference to this play, "It has as its philosophy . . . that we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." (p. 1761)

True to his intentions, Wilde exercised great skill and little restraint in crafting a satire that poked fun at many of society's most sacred and untouchable institutions. Throughout the play, Wilde's characters' assault the hypocrisy of society with a series of biting commentaries. The plot of the play is built upon the desires of two young men to marry two young women who in turn desire to marry only men named Ernest.

As marriage is at the plot's core, it makes some sense that Wilde takes frequent and steady aim at this institution and the expectations and customs which have formed themselves around it. This is the case, even though marriage was sought after by these two young men in desperate and absurd ways. Among the views expressed by Wilde's characters is the idea that romance and happiness are hindered within the bonds of matrimony. Algernon, in his counsel to Jack regarding his desire to propose marriage to Algernon's cousin, had the following to say.

> **"ALGERNON I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll try to forget the fact.**
>
> **"JACK I have no doubt about that, Dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted." (p. 1763)**

In other words: As uncertainty is the basis for romance, once marriage is proposed, romance ends.

The idea that marriage is a source of stress and unhappiness is highlighted as well. In describing a visit to an acquaintance who was recently widowed, Lady Bracknell said,

> **" . . . I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger." In a later dialogue, Lady Bracknell said the following in regards to her late brother-in-law, " . . . He was eccentric, I admit. But**

> **only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind." (p. 1804)**

Marriage, in this case, was placed on a par with respect to its effects upon the man's psyche to some relatively uncomfortable conditions.

According to Algernon, marriage would be tedious if the husband didn't have an imagined friend like his own Bunbury to whom he could pay frequent visits. As he put it, **" . . . You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none." (p. 1767)**

A further point on which Wilde disparaged the institution of marriage has to do with the ways in which a spouse is chosen. The play's characters make their decisions on marital partners quickly and with little thought devoted to substantive issues related to their choice of spouses. In the case of Algernon and Cecily, Algernon, in the guise of Jack's younger brother Ernest, declared his love and proposed marriage after a single afternoon together. Following this however, Cecily informs him that in fact she had actually been engaged to him for nearly three months. Having heard so much about the brother Ernest her guardian Jack had invented as an excuse to visit town frequently, she became attracted to him. After a short period of imagined courtship, they became engaged. (pp. 1786 and 1787)

An additional point regarding the choice of suitors had to do with their names. For both Cecily and Gwendolen, it was vital that they marry someone of the name Ernest. Gwendolen saw it as her ideal to marry a man of the name Ernest. When she heard that her cousin had a friend by that name, she was instantly intrigued. She described the name Ernest as having a musical quality lacking in most names. She went so far as to pity any woman married to a man whose name was Jack as that name lacked vibration. She concluded that the only safe name was Ernest. (p. 1770) Cecily for her part had always had the fantasy of loving a man named Ernest. She felt that the name inspired confidence. (p. 1787) For both women, marriage to anyone with another name would have been inconceivable even though they freely professed great love for the men who had asked them for their hands.

A satire can be compared to a caricature in its ability to point up flaws and distinctive features by enlarging and expanding upon them to the point where they dominate the portrait and give it a distinctly comic dimension. The flaws inherent in 19th century society in general and its prevailing attitudes toward marriage specifically became, under Wilde's pen, a ready source for comic social commentary.

The Importance of Being Earnest as a farcical comedy

An Artificial, Farcical Comedy: - The Importance of Being Earnest belongs to a literary genre known as artificial comedy. This kind of play flourished during the Restoration in England and was subsequently revived by Congreve. This kind of comedy is entirely lacking in truth to nature, and it creates an artificial, imaginary, illusory world. The Importance of Being Earnest too is deficient in truth to nature. However, it is free from the indecency and obscenity which were a glaring feature of Restoration comedy. The Importance of Being Earnest is characterized by exaggeration and extravagance both in its plot and its dialogue. In fact, the keynote of this play is absurdity. The proper description of this play is to call it a farce.

An Artist in Sheer Nonsense: - One of the contemporary reviewers of this play expressed the view that by writing The Importance of Being Earnest Wilde "found himself as an artist in sheer nonsense". That reviewer called this play a farce "in which there is no discordant note of seriousness". "It is of nonsense all compact, and better nonsense our stage has. not seen," he added. In this play Wilde shows himself as "an artificer of the ludicrous". There is no philosophy, no profundity, no underlying significance, no symbolism, and no theme even in this play. It is just talk, witty talk, and the chief interest of thee play lies in that witty talk.

A Trivial Comedy For Serious People: - Wide described the play as a "trivial comedy", and, he was right ; but he also described it as a trivial comedy "for serious people", which is a paradox characteristic of Wilde. How can a trivial comedy appeal to serious people ? Perhaps Wilde meant that even serious people would be moved to laughter by the comedy of this play. Or, perhaps, he meant that, though it was a trivial comedy,, it did convey certain ideas which might interest serious people.

The Farcical Situation of a Baby Found in a Hand-Bag: - The distinguishing feature of a farcical comedy, as already indicated above, is exaggeration to the point of absurdity. Now, most of the situations in The Importance of Being Earnest are absurd and they amuse us by their very absurdity. The central situation about which the play hinges is Jack's having been found in a hand-bag in the cloak-room of a railway station in London. Jack is thus a foundling. (A foundling is a child who is found somewhere, having been abandoned or forsaken, most probably because it was -an illegitimate child and its mother wanted to get. rid of it in the hope that somebody else would find it and bring it up out of sympathy or pass it on to an orphanage). The fact of` being a foundling is not by itself absurd. What is absurd is that Miss Prism, the nurse, committed a blunder by putting the child in a hand-bag and the three-volume novel written by her in the perambulator instead of putting the manuscript in the hand-bag and letting the child remain in the perambulator. Now, it is impossible for us to believe that anybody, no matter how absentminded, can commit a blunder of that kind. That is not the only absurdity. We do not understand why, after having committed that blunder, Miss Prism did not go back to her employers to report the loss of the child and why she simply disappeared from the scene. There is nothing absurd about Mr. Thomas Cardew's discovery of the foundling, but it is absurd that he should have named the child Worthing because he was having a first-class railway ticket for a sea-side resort called Worthing.

The Witty Remarks Made By Lady Bracknell: - The absurdity of the manner in which Jack was lost as an infant serves as the basis for a number of witty remarks by Lady Bracknell and also as the basis for her rejection of Jack as her would-be son-in-law. When, in the course of her interrogation of Jack, she is told that he does not know his parentage, she tells him that she can never allow her daughter "to marry into a cloak-room and form an alliance with a parcel", which is one of her most witty remarks. When Jack asks her what he should do under the circumstances, her advice to him is to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, as soon as possible. When, towards the end of the play, Miss Prism gives an account of how she had lost the child, Jack jumps to the conclusion that he is the illegitimate son of Miss Prism herself and so he amuses us by offering to forgive his supposed mother for her act of folly in having been seduced and having given birth to an illegitimate child.

The Absurdity of Gwendolen's Rapturous Reaction to the Name "Ernest" : - Another absurdity which could be found only in a farcical comedy is Gwendolen's rapturous reaction to the name of Ernest. She tells Jack that it had always been her ideal to love

some one of the name of Earnest because there is something in this name that inspires absolute confidence. She adds that the moment her cousin Algernon first mentioned to, her the fact that he had a friend called Ernest, she knew that she was destined; to love the man having that name. She also makes the paradoxical statement that she was far from indifferent to Jack even before having met him. He always had an irresistible fascination for her, she says. She also makes it clear that she could not love a man with any other name. The name Jack, for instance, is not acceptable to her because this name is a notorious domesticity for John. Gwendolen pities any woman who is married to a man called John because such a woman would never enjoy the pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The name Ernest, she says, is a divine name, with a music of its own. It is a name that produces vibrations. All Gwendolen's comments on the name Ernest are absurd, but delightfully witty. No woman in her senses would talk in this way about a name, but this very talk constitutes one of the comic highlights of the play.

The Absurdity of Cecily's Having Fallen in Love With Algernon: - Another absurdity in this farcical comedy is Cecily's similar reaction to the name Ernest. Cecily too says that there is something in the name Ernest which seems to inspire absolute confidence, and she too pities any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest. She too says that it had always been a girlish dream of hers to love some one whose name was Ernest. We have already noted the absurdity of Gwendolen's reaction to the name Ernest, and now a similar reaction oh the part of another girl to that name makes the situation doubly absurd. Not only that, the absurdity in Cecily's case is further heightened by the account she gives to Jack of now she tell in love with him and got engaged to him in her imagination. She tells Jack that she had become engaged to him on the kith of February, about three months ago, and that the next day she had bought an engagement ring in his name and also a bangle with the true lover's knot which she promised him in her imagination always to wear. The absurdity does not end here. Cecily has also been writing letters to her lover, and been replying to those letters on his behalf. She always wrote three times a week, and sometimes oftener. "Oh one occasion she broke off her engagement with him because of a quarrel, but she forgave him within the same week and got engaged to him again.

The Absurdity of the Proposed Christenings: - Yet another absurdity in the play is "the decision of both Algernon and Jack to be rechristened in order to acquire the name of Ernest watch has fascinated their beloveds. Both of them make appointments with Dr. Chasuble for the christening ceremonies which Dr. Chasuble readily agrees to perform is really surprising and incredible that two sensible, well-educated girls should be fascinated by a name, and that two sensible and well-educated men should think of changing their names to Ernest because of that fascination. But farcical situations are always incredible or at least improbable.

The Absurdity of Certain Remarks and Statements: - Then there are some remarks made by the various characters, in the play which are too preposterous to be believed, and these remarks too are part of the farce. For instance, Gwendolen makes the paradoxical and amusing remark that the simplicity of Jack's character makes him exquisitely incomprehensible to her. (if a man's character is simple, it should be perfectly comprehensible and not incomprehensible). Cecily makes the remark that the memory of a human being records the things that have never happened and could no; possibly have happened, which too is a paradoxical statement. Dr. Chasuble says that his sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful or distressing. Cecily's keenness to enter in her diary the words that Algernon speaks in praise of her beauty is also absurd. Her saying that Dr. Chasuble is a great scholar who has never written a single book is also a remark of that kind. Algernon

makes the remark that half of the people who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. Another remark of the same kind which Algernon makes is that, when he is in. trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles him.

The Realistic Elements in the Play: - In spite of so many absurdities in this play, it must be admitted that there are a number of realistic, and credible situations and happenings in the play also. For instance, there is nothing, nonsensical or absurd or fantastic about Algernon's invention of Bunbury and Jack's invention of a younger brother called Ernest. We all seek excuses for some of out unusual or objectionable activities, and both Algernon and Jack have created two persons in order to cover up their escapades. Lady Bracknell's reaction to Jack's account of his origin is also perfectly believable. No society lady would agree to the marriage of her daughter with a man whose parentage is not known. Lady Bracknell's reaction to the fact that Cecily has a large amount of money in her name is also perfectly believable, because a bride who can bring a rich dowry is always acceptable to people. There is nothing fantastic about the three love-affairs in the play also. It is perfectly natural for Jack to be in love with Gwendolen, for Algernon to fall in love with Cecily as soon as he sees her, and for Dr Chasuble to be attracted by Miss Prism and to marry her in order to relieve his loneliness even though the Primitive Church was opposed to matrimony. Nor is there anything absurd about Gwendolen's flight from home to meet her lover at his country home. So many girls run away from their homes to join their lovers.

The Possible Appeal of This Play For Serious People: - It is quite possible that Wilde, apart from providing rich comic fare to his audiences, wanted also the serious people among them to derive some food for thought from his play. Wilde posed as a "trifler", but he was a, trifler with a capacity for, thinking, and there is often a wonderful suggestiveness in his lightest banter and his wildest paradox. Several remarks in the play seem-to have a" serious point. For instance, the excessive consumption of wine by servants at parties at. Algernon's flat is the kind of complaint which all bachelors will share. Again, Algernon voices a well established fact that, strictly speaking, romance ends when a proposal of marriage is accepted. Algernon is right also when he speaks of English society of the time suffering from the corruption which was depicted in French drama. That relatives are a pack of tedious people is another observation containing a large measure of truth. Another serious element in the play is the portrayal of Lady Bracknell as a snobbish woman with a mercenary outlook. This portrayal is a satirical attack on social snobbery, class-consciousness, and greed for money. The portrayal of Dr. Chasuble may also be taken in a serious light as a satirical picture of the .hypocrisy and shallowness of certain members of the clergy. Furthermore, the play also poses the problem as to how Jack should have been treated by society if he had really been an abandoned, illegitimate child. Gwendolen, no doubt, finds Jack's origin to be exciting or stirring, but Lady Bracknell rejects him summarily, and it is Lady Bracknell, who is the true representative of fashionable society. Indeed, there is much food for thought in the play for serious people, and the author has made it very enjoyable too by his wit.

The Importance of Being Earnest : A comedy of dialogue

Abundant Use of Paradox, Epigram, and Comic Irony: - The Importance of Being Earnest is a comedy of dialogue, abounding in the use of paradox, epigram, and irony. All these three devices produce a comic effect in this play, even though it is possible for a dramatist to use these devices for a serious purpose also. There are a number of paradoxical statements, epigrammatic remarks, and ironical or sarcastic remarks, all of a

comic nature so" as to amuse us. When the play is presented on the stage, the audience would keep laughing most of the time because of the witty paradoxes and witty remarks of an ironical nature.

Paradoxical Statements Made By Algernon: - A paradoxical statement may mean something seemingly absurd yet true in fact ; or it may mean a statement apparently at variance with or in opposition to established principles yet demonstrably true ; or it may mean a statement expressing an idea which is contrary to received opinion. Almost every character in The Importance of Being Earnest makes paradoxical remarks which are witty. At the very outset, for instance, Algernon says that the lower orders of society should set a good example of moral responsibility for the upper classes. This is a paradoxical statement, because the accepted view is that the upper classes should set a good example for the lower classes to follow. Algernon soon afterwards, talking to Jack, makes the statement that more than half of modern culture depends on what people should not read. This is a paradoxical remark because, in actual fact, reading contributes to the development of culture. Another paradoxical statement made by Algernon is that the truth is rarely pure and never simple, the accepted view being that truth can be pure and -simple. Algernon here adds that modern literature would be. a .complete impossibility if truth were either pure or simple, and this is another paradox. Algernon also says that literary criticism should be left to people who have not been at a university, and this too is a paradoxical statement because in actual fact literary critics are people who have had the benefit of a university education. When Algernon demands from Jack an explanation of the inscription on his cigarette-case, Algernon speaks in a paradoxical manner, saying to Jack : "Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable," whereas normally we would say : "Now produce your explanation, and pray make it probable or plausible." When Algernon describes women's flirtation with their own husbands as washing their clean linen in public, he is again making a paradoxical statement because the idiom is "to wash one's dirty linen in public" Another paradoxical statement made by Algernon is that in married life three is company and two is none, whereas the common saying is that two is company and three is none. Algernon again makes a paradoxical statement when he says that people who are not serious about their meals are very shallow-minded, because the accepted view is that people who are too particular about their meals must be shallow-minded and not in the habit of thinking. Algernon also says that he loves to hear his relations abused and that it is the only thing that makes him put up with them at all. This is a paradoxical statement because normally we do not want to hear our relatives abused. Another paradoxical remark from Algernon is as follows : "It is awfully hard work doing nothing." How can idleness or doing nothing be regarded as awfully hard work ? (This remark has also an epigrammatic quality). When Algernon says that he loves scrapes (or difficult situations) because they are the only things that are never serious be makes a paradoxical statement because scrapes or difficulties are certainly serious matters which give rise to feelings of anxiety in us. Another paradoxical statement made by Algernon is as follows : "Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants "to have any amusement in life." How can seriousness about anything be a source of amusement ? Yet another paradoxical statement made by him is the following : "When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy." The real fact is that when one is in trouble or is unhappy, one feels no desire to eat anything.

Paradoxical Remarks Made By Jack: - Jack also makes a number of paradoxical statements which are quite amusing. For instance, when he sees tea-cups and cucumber sandwiches on the table in Algernon's flat, he says to Algernon : "Why all these cups ?

Why cucumber sandwiches ? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young ?" In the first place, cucumber sandwiches are no sign of reckless extravagance ; and secondly it is only the young who are recklessly extravagant. Talking of modern culture, Jack says that it is not the sort of thing one should talk about in private. This is a paradoxical remark because there is no reason why modern culture or any other culture should not be talked about in private as well as in public. Jack makes another paradoxical statement when he says that the truth is not quite the sort of thing one should tell to a nice, sweet, and refined girl, because the normal view of the matter is that a nice and sweet girl should always be told the truth and should not be deceived. Talking of Cecily, Jack says that she is not a silly girl, that she has an excellent appetite and takes long walks, adding paradoxically that she pays no attention at all to her studies. Yet another paradoxical statement made by Jack is that it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Why should it be something terrible for anybody to discover that he has been speaking the truth? After making this statement, Jack asks Gwendolen whether she can forgive .him for having spoken nothing but the truth, and this question which he asks her is also paradoxical.

Gwendolen's Paradoxical Remarks: - A number of paradoxical and witty remarks come from Gwendolen also. When Algernon says that he cannot allow Gwendolen to have a private conversation with Jack, Gwendolen makes the following paradoxical remark to Algernon : "Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that." Then she makes another paradoxical statement by saying : "The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out." (Respect is always shown to the elderly people and not to the young). Speaking to Jack, Gwendolen says : "The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me." (If a man has a simple character, he is fully comprehensible, and not incomprehensible as Gwendolen says). Another paradoxical remark made by Gwendolen is that the home is the proper sphere for a man, while the actual fact is that the home is the proper sphere for a woman. Gwendolen adds that when a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, and this too is a paradoxical remark. A very amusing paradoxical remark is made by Gwendolen when, on being asked by Jack to wait for him till he comes back, she says to him : "If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life." The two parts of this reply by Gwendolen contradict each other.

Cecily's Paradoxical Remarks: - Cecily makes her own contribution to the paradoxical and witty statements in this play. After her German lessons she becomes less attractive in her appearance, she says to her governess. Memory, says Cecily, usually records the things that have never happened, and could not possibly have happened. When Miss Prism tells Cecily that she had once written a novel, Cecily makes the following paradoxical remark : "I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much." (Why should novels with a happy ending depress anybody ?) When Algernon, after saying that he would like to reform himself, tells Cecily that he is feeling hungry, Cecily makes the paradoxical statement that when one is going to lead an entirely new life one requires regular and wholesome meals. Yet another paradoxical remark that she makes is that it is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very short time. Speaking of her engagement with Algernon, she says that it would hardly have been a really serious, engagement if it had not been broken off at least once. Cecily also makes the paradoxical remark that, whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid. (Actually, of course, when somebody has anything unpleasant to say, we expect him not to say it in a blunt or candid manner).

Lady Bracknell's Paradoxical Remarks: - Lady Bracknell, who has a very fertile and pungent wit, makes a number of paradoxical statements. Speaking of Lady Harbury who

has lost her husband, Lady Bracknell says that Lady Harbury is now an altered woman because she looks at least twenty years younger. (Normally, when a woman has become a widow, she looks older on account of her grief at her widowhood). Lady Bracknell, paradoxically enough, does not approve of anything that interferes with anybody's natural ignorance. She feels happy to note that in England education produces no effect whatsoever. If education were to produce any effect, it would prove to be a serious danger to the upper classes. These are paradoxical remarks because the accepted view is that ignorance should be removed through education, and that education has a beneficial effect upon all classes. When Jack admits that he smokes, Lady Bracknell paradoxically says : "I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind." (She regards smoking as an occupation). Another paradoxical remark made by Lady Bracknell is that a girt with a simple, unspoiled nature like Gwendolen is not expected to reside in the countryside. Her comments on the death of Mr. Bunbury are also of a paradoxical nature. Mr. Bunbury, she says, seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. Lady Bracknell recommends, Algernon as a would-be husband for Cecily by making the paradoxical remark that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon I When Lady Bracknell thinks that a heated argument is going on upstairs, she makes the following paradoxical statement : "I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing." (Actually convincing arguments appeal to people, but Lady Bracknell finds convincing arguments to be unwelcome).

Witty Epigrams in the Play: - Witty epigrams are also contributed to the play by almost all the characters. An epigram is an interesting or amusing thought expressed in a few words. Or, an epigram may be defined as a short, pointed saying, ingenious in thought and clever in expression. Thus Algernon makes an epigrammatic remark when he says that the very essence of romance is uncertainty. He then makes another epigrammatic remark when he says that divorces are made in heaven, thus giving a twist to the well-known saying that marriages are made in heaven. Algernon also makes the epigrammatic remark that the only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is not pretty. Jack gives us an epigram when he says : "When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people." Again, Jack makes an epigrammatic remark by saying "It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression." Cecily makes an epigrammatic remark when she says: "Of course, a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him, after all." Then we get a few epigrams from Miss Prism also. "Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side," she says with reference to the devaluation of the rupee. By persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation, says Miss Prism in an epigrammatic manner, adding in the same style : "Men should be more careful ; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray." Miss Prism gives us a number of epigrammatic statements in one of her speeches "Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green."

Irony in the Play: - There is plenty of irony in this play, and it is comic irony of course. The essence of comic irony is mockery or deception of one kind or another, and its force derives from the pleasure in contrasting "appearances" with "reality". There are various types of comic irony. The simplest and the most commonly used is verbal irony which occurs when the speaker says the opposite of what he means and yet conveys his real meaning so as to produce an amusing effect. In this case the proper signification of the words constitutes the appearance ; and the destined meaning is the reality. Irony also means a kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to approve or defend them. Irony means, too, pretending ignorance with the intention of

irritating or perplexing somebody in agreement or dispute. Jack's remade to Lady Bracknell : "How extremely kind of you," when Lady Bracknell says that she is satisfied with certain particulars about Cecily, is ironical. So is Lady Bracknell's remark : "A life crowded with incident," when Jack tells her about the certificates which be has got regarding Cecily's birth, baptism, etc. There is irony in Algernon's pointing out to his servant that in a bachelor's house the servants invariably drink costly wines. (In this case Algernon knows the reason but pretends ignorance). There is irony in Cecily's remark to Miss Prism : "You know German and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much." (Here Cecily is ridiculing Miss Prism's self-conceit about her knowledge of German and geology). Comic irony also exists in a clash between one aspect and another of some double situation, the whole of which is understood by the reader and some of the characters, while other characters are ignorant of it. An obvious example is Algernon's coming to Jack's country house under the assumed name of Ernest and pretending to be Jack's younger brother. Here the reader, as well as Algernon and Jack, knows the reality, but Cecily and the others do not.

The Importance of Being Earnest as a social satire

The Targets of Satire in This Play: -A satire is a humorous or witty exposure of human failings; weaknesses, follies, absurdities, and pretensions. The Importance of Being Earnest is truly a satire, and a very witty and amusing one. The principal target of satire in this play is the English upper class of the time, although we have a couple of satirical portraits of persons belonging to certain different orders of society, namely those of a clergyman and a governess. The author in this play ridicules certain typical representatives of the English aristocracy of the time, and he equally ridicules certain other persons as well.

The Satirical Portrayal of Algernon: - Let us take the case of Algernon first. He is a typical representative of the English upper class of the time, and he has been portrayed in a satirical manner. His shallowness, irresponsibility, extravagance, and vanity have been exposed in such a manner as to make us laugh at this specimen of the aristocracy. If the servants in his house drink his champagne, he treats the matter light-heartedly. He throws expensive parties, even though he admits that he is short of money. He tells Jack that he would like to get a prize for restoring his cigarette-case to him because he is particularly hard up at this time. In fact, he is in a state of indebtedness. As Lady Bracknell points out, "he has nothing but his debts to depend upon." Another trait of his character which is satirically treated is his gluttony. As Jack points out, this man is always hungry and is always eating whether it be cucumber sandwiches or muffins. He wants Jack to invite him to dinner at an expensive restaurant. One would think that eating is his main bobby. Algernon is a fashionable man, and is always over-dressed. This too is something to make us laugh, because aristocratic young men attach too much importance to their clothes. As Lady Bracknell points out, Algernon "is nothing but he looks every thing". According to Jack. Algernon has a ridiculous vanity. This is clear from the fact that Algernon claims to be always "immensely over-educated". His vanity is seen also in his claim that he plays on the piano with wonderful expression, sentiment being his forte. One of his absurdities is that he expects the lower orders of society to set a good example of moral responsibility to the upper classes. His view that relatives are "a tedious pack of people" again shows his vanity and his egoism. He actually loves to hear his relatives abused. One aspect of his shallowness is that at every party he would like to flirt with some woman. Nor does his Bunburying do him any credit. In short, the whole portrayal of Algernon is satirical, his only commendable and admirable quality being his brilliant wit.

The Satirical Portrayal of Jack: - Then there is Jack. He too is a representative of the upper class. But he is a much better specimen because there is much in him that we approve. He is a responsible-minded guardian, and he is a serious type of young man in whose talk, according to Miss Prism, "there is no room for triviality and idle merriment". But he goes to the other extreme. While Algernon is too light-hearted, Jack is too serious-minded. His very solemnity is made to look ridiculous. Cecily says that her Uncle Jack sometimes looks so serious as to give the impression that he is unwell. Algernon says that lack is "the most earnest-looking man" he has ever known. Jack's over-seriousness has sharply been contrasted with Algernon's gaiety. Jack's over-seriousness is also to be found in his refusal to go either to the theatre, or to the club, or to the Empire. When asked by Algernon what they should do, Jack's reply is : "Nothing". Nor is his over-seriousness the only ridiculous aspect of his character. He thinks Gwendolen to be a very intellectual kind of girl, while we know her to be absolutely shallow. He admires Cecily not only because she has an excellent appetite and takes long walks but also because she pays no attention at all to her studies. He does not believe in telling the truth to a nice, sweet, refined girt. He does not know whether a severe chill is hereditary or not. Thus the portrayal of Jack too is satirical in intention and in effect.

The Satirical Portrayal of Gwendolen: - There are three women representatives of the upper class, and each has been portrayed in a satirical manner. There is Gwendolen whose superficiality and ignorance are extremely amusing. For instance, she cannot understand how anybody of any importance can exist in the countryside. Nor did she have any idea that there were flowers growing in the countryside. Though fond of living in the town, she hates crowds. She is proud of the fact that she has never seen a spade. When she makes a railway journey, she likes to carry her diary with her because she wants to read something sensational. But her most amusing absurdity is her enthusiastic reaction to the name of Ernest. She thinks Ernest to be a divine name which has a music of its own and which produces vibrations. It was always her cherished ideal to love someone of the name of Ernest, she says. In order to marry the man with whom she has fallen in love, chiefly on the basis of his name, she runs away from home thus showing no regard at all for the decencies of family life. It is clear, then, that the author is laughing at this aristocratic young girl and, of course, he makes us laugh at her too. In her case too it could be said that her talent for witty conversation is her only redeeming quality.

The Satirical Elements in the Portrayal of Cecily: - Cecily is another representative of the upper class and though a better specimen than Gwendolen, she amuses us by her failings and absurdities. She is not at all interested in German grammar, political economy, or geography, all of which she regards as "horrid" She keeps a diary in which she .records every minor detail of her life, calling its contents "the wonderful secrets of life". Though she does have charm, and a good deal of it, she yet shows a ridiculous side to her personality. Like Gwendolen, she too goes into raptures over the name Ernest. It had always been a girlish dream of hers to love someone of the name of Ernest, she says. Her account of how she had fallen in love with Ernest is even more absurd than her enthusiastic reaction to the name. She fell in love with him without even having seen or met him ; she got engaged to him in her imagination ; she even bought herself an engagement ring on his behalf ; and once she broke off the engagement. Her absurdity appears further in her wanting to put down in her diary every word that her lover has to say in praise of her.

The Satirical Portrayal of Lady Bracknell: - The portrayal of Lady Bracknell is perhaps the most satirical of all. In this case the author simply gloats over his task of exposing the foibles and absurdities of the upper-class ladies of his time. Nor is there any doubt about

the enormous success that the author has made of his job. Lady Bracknell claims to have a taste for music, but she would like her nephew to make the selection of the numbers to be played at her party. In other words, her taste in music is simply a pretence. But this is only a minor, foible in her. Her principal absurdities are her snobbery, her class-consciousness, her mercenary outlook on life, her suspicious nature, and her domineering temperament. The manner in which she cross-examines Jack to determine his suitability as her son-in-law shows both her suspicious nature and her domineering temperament. Both these traits appear again in the questions which she subsequently asks in order to determine suitability of Cecily as a wife for Algernon. This second cross-examination shows also the importance of money in her eyes because, as soon as she learns that Cecily will bring a rich dowry, she begins to see, in Cecily certain qualities which she had not observed before. But even then she speaks to Cecily and about Cecily in a patronizing, tone, and adopts a superior attitude towards her. Perhaps her greatest absurdity appears in her claim that, although she herself did not have any fortune, she did not allow that circumstance to stand in the way of her marrying Lord Bracknell. Her domineering nature appears also in the manner in which she exercises rigid control over her daughter and her own husband, and this aspect her life is also ridiculed by the author. The portrayals of Lady Bracknell and the two younger specimens of the aristocracy are thus very successful in exposing the failings and absurdities of the society ladies of the time.

The Satirical Portrayal of Dr. Chasuble: - Another satirical portrait in the play is that of Dr. Chasuble. This portrait is a satire on clergymen. A clergyman is expected to inspire respect, but Dr. Chasuble excites our mirth. Dr. Chasuble is ridiculed for his pompous manner of speaking, his hypocrisy, his lack of real scholarship, and his materialistic attitude to life. As for his pompous manner of speaking, one example will serve the purpose. On seeing Jack in mourning clothes, Dr. Chasuble says to him : "Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity ?" His lack of any real learning is evident from Cecily's remark that he is one of the most learned men because he has not written a single book. It is absurd on his part to claim that a particular sermon of his can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful or distressing. Another absurdity in his talk occurs when he makes a classical allusion drawn from the pagan authors. He is a Christian priest, but he quotes pagan authors. His hypocrisy appears in the fact that in theory he is opposed to matrimony but that actually he has been flirting with Miss Prism precisely with the object of marrying her. He is a clergyman without any really spiritual quality. He feels very disappointed when Algernon and Jack give up their intention to be baptised after having obtained his view that there can be no technical objection to the baptism of grown-up people.

The Satirical Portrayal of Miss Prism: - Miss Prism amuses us by her literary pretensions. She once wrote a three-volume novel which she deposited" in the perambulator while she put the baby under her charge in a hand-bag which she placed in a railway cloak-room. Nothing could be more absurd than this behaviour which is supposed to have resulted from her absent-mindedness. In addition to her literary pretensions, she also has moral pretensions which she shows in her dislike of the wicked younger brother of Jack Worthing and in her feeling of joy at the reported death of that wicked fellow. As a man sows, so shall he reap, she remarks on this occasion, with an air of moral superiority. The portrayal of Miss Prism is also satirical.

The Importance of Being Earnest : A comic treatment of the theme of love and marriage

Three Successful Love-Affairs: - There are three love-affairs in the Importance of Being Earnest. Jack Worthing is in love with Gwendolen Fairfax ; Algernon is in love with Cecily Cardew ; and Dr. Chasuble is drawn towards Miss Prism who is the governess in Jack's household. There is no serious obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of any of the love-affairs, and the desire of each of the characters is fulfilled by the time the play ends.

Jack's Intention to Propose Marriage to Gwendolen: - We learn about Jack's love for Gwendolen in the very opening Act. Jack is on a visit to Algernon whom he informs that be has come to town expressly to propose marriage to Gwendolen. Algernon's comment on Jack's intention is that there is nothing romantic in proposing marriage though it is very romantic to be in love. The excitement comes to an end with the acceptance of a proposal of marriage, says Algernon. He also says that, if ever he gets married, he will try to forget the fact, to which Jack replies that the Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are short. Algernon remarks that divorces are made in heaven.

Gwendolen's Prompt Acceptance (if Jack's Proposal of Marriage: - Lady Bracknell comes to Algernon's flat for tea in the company of her daughter Gwendolen. As already arranged between Algernon and Jack, Algernon takes Lady Bracknell away into another room in order to enable Jack to have a few moments alone with Gwendolen and to make his proposal of marriage. Jack expresses his love for Gwendolen in a halting, hesitant manner, but Gwendolen gives him a favourable reply promptly and in unambiguous terms. She tells him that it has been her ideal to love someone of the name of Ernest because there" is something in that name which inspires absolute confidence. (She knows Jack under his assumed name of Ernest). She tells Jack that he has always had an irresistible fascination for her. When Jack asks her if she would not have loved him in case his name had been different, she says that this question involves a metaphysical speculation and has no reference to the actual facts of real life. When Jack says that the name Ernest does not suit him at all, Gwendolen replies that it suits him perfectly, that it is a divine name with a music of its own, and that it produces vibrations. Jack asks her what she thinks of the name Jack, and Gwendolen says that this name has no music in it, that it does not thrill her," and that it produces absolutely no vibration. The name Jack, she says, is a "notorious domesticity" for John, and a woman married to a man having this name would never have the pleasure" of a single moment's solitude. The only real safe name is Ernest, says Gwendolen. Jack then decides to be christened in order to acquire the name of Ernest. When Jack says that they must get married at once, Gwendolen replies that he has mentioned marriage without having formally proposed to her whereupon Jack makes a formal proposal which Gwendolen immediately accepts, saying that his eyes are wonderfully blue and expressing the hope that he will always look at her in the same loving manner in which he is looking at her now.

Lady Bracknell's Objection to Jack's Proposal of Marriage: - Then comes the obstacle in the way of the marriage of Jack and Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell cross-examines Jack in order to determine his suitability as her would-be son-in-law. In reply to her questions, he tells her that he does not smoke, that his age is twentynine, that he knows nothing, that his income is between, seven and eight thousand pounds a year, that he has a country house with some land attached to it, and so on. Lady Bracknell feels quite satisfied with all these particulars but when Jack tells her, in reply to another question, that he does not know his parentage and that he was found as an infant by Mr. Thomas Cardew, a man of a very charitable and benevolent nature, who brought him up and gave him the name of Worthing, Lady Bracknell feels outraged and tells him that she cannot allow her daughter to marry a man who was found as an infant in a hand-bag

lying in a railway cloak-room. She cannot allow her only daughter "to marry into a cloak room and form an alliance with a parcel" says Lady Bracknell. The interrogation by Lady Bracknell has been quite an ordeal for Jack who tells Algernon that Lady Bracknell is perfectly unbearable and that she is really a Gorgon, "a monster without being a myth".

The Love-Affair Between Algernon and Cecily: - The love-affair between Algernon and Cecily begins in Act II. Algernon's curiosity about Cecily having been aroused by the inscription on Jack's cigarette-case, Algernon visits Jack's country residence in the disguise of Jack's younger brother, Ernest (who is an imaginary person invented by. Jack as an excuse for paying his frequent visits to London). Algernon falls in love with Cecily at first sight and, when he praises her beauty, she tells him that she had fallen in love with him without even having met or seen him. He tells her that he thinks her to be the visible personification of absolute perfection, and that he loves her wildly, passionately, devotedly, and hopelessly. He then asks her if she will marry him, and she replies that she will certainly marry him because she has been engaged to him for the last three months. Algernon is surprised to hear this. But Cecily explains that she fell in love with him at the very time when her Uncle Jack first told her that he had a younger brother by the name of Ernest who was very wicked and bad. She had even bought herself an engagement ring on his behalf and she had also obtained a bangle with the true lover's knot as a gift from him. Not only that, she had been writing letters to him regularly and had herself been replying to them on his behalf. Once she had broken off the engagement because he bad offended her, but she had forgiven him within the same week, and the engagement had been restored. She then praises his hair for curling naturally, and she admires his name, saying that it had always been a girlish dream of hers to love some one having, the name of Ernest because there was something in that name which inspired absolute confidence. Algernon asks her whether she could not have loved him if his name had been different, and Cecily replies that if he had a different name, such as Algernon, she might have admired his character but she could not have given him her undivided attention. On learning that the name Ernest has a great deal to do with Cecily's love for him, Algernon too decides to undergo a christening ceremony in order to acquire the name of Ernest, just as lack had done.: It is amusing to find that both Jack and Algernon now make an appointment with Dr. Chasuble for christening ceremonies in order to get the name of Ernest which: has a great charm for both Gwendolen and Cecily. It is part of the absurdity of this play that two well-educated and aristocratic girls are fascinated by the name Ernest and that they fall in love with two men who are supposed to have this name.

A Misunderstanding Between the Two Girls: - A misunderstanding arises when Gwendolen comes on a visit to Jack's country residence. Both Gwendolen and Cecily think that the same man, by the name of Ernest, has proposed marriage to them. They exchange some sarcastic remarks because of this misunderstanding. The misunderstanding is, however, cleared up and the two women become allies on discovering that neither of their lovers has the name of Ernest. Jack admits that he has no brother at all, while Algernon also admits that he is not Ernest but Algernon. These confessions by the two men annoy the girls and they behave as if they were feeling greatly offended with their lovers for having pretended to have a name which they actually did not have. However, they admire their lovers" spirit of self-sacrifice in so far as they are ready to undergo the ceremony of being christened once again at this age in order to - acquire the name of Ernest. In view of this readiness on the part of the two men to undergo the christening ceremony, the girls no longer attach any importance to the name. However, a new hitch arises, and it is in Act III that this hitch is dealt with learning that her nephew Algernon is interested in marrying Cecily, she inquires about

various particulars of the girl and feels quite satisfied as to her suitability as her nephew's wife when she is told that Cecily has a large amount of money in her name. Lady Bracknell gives her approval to the proposed marriage of Algernon and Cecily, but she still does not approve of her daughter Gwendolen marrying Jack, her objection being that his parentage is unknown and that he is therefore not acceptable to her as a son-in-law.

Jack's Objection: - Jack, who is Cecily's legal guardian, now refuses to allow Cecily to get married to Algernon. When Lady Bracknell asks him why he does not allow this marriage, he says that the solution to the problem lies in Lady Bracknell's own hands. He will allow his ward Cecily to marry Algernon, if Lady Bracknell allows her daughter Gwendolen to marry him (Jack).

A Discovery: -Lady Bracknell still cannot allow her daughter to marry a man whose parentage is unknown. But this difficulty is removed when, as a result of Lady Bracknell's interrogation of Miss Prism, it is found that Jack is the son of Lady Bracknell's own late sister and the elder brother of Algernon. In view of this discovery, Lady Bracknell can have no objection to the marriage of her daughter Gwendolen to Jack.

The Love-Affair Between Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble: - The third love-affair which also achieves its fulfilment is the one between Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble. We meet both these persons in Act II and it becomes clear as soon as they are introduced to us that they are emotionally interested in each other. Cecily has perceived the attraction between the Rector and her governess, and that is why she suggests that Miss Prism should go for a walk with Dr. Chasuble. Miss Prism suggests to Dr. Chasuble that, in view of his loneliness, he should get married. She can understand a "misanthrope", but not a "womanthrope", she says. Dr. Chasuble replies that the Primitive Church was distinctly opposed to matrimony, but Miss Prism says that, by persistently remaining unmarried, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. The flirtation between Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism leads to a happy result. When Gwendolen and Cecily accept their respective lovers whole-heartedly, Dr. Chasuble embraces Miss Prism and says enthusiastically : "At last" ! Thus the play ends with the fulfilment of the three love-affairs.

The Importance of Being Earnest : Use of wit

A Dearth of Action in Wilde's Plays: - There is very little action in the plays of Oscar Wilde. Wilde's own mother once complained to him about the dearth of action in his plays and urged him to put more action in them. However, action was not the strong point of Wilde as a playwright. All his famous plays, of which there are only four, are comedies of dialogue, and The Importance of Being Earnest is no exception. The notion in this play is quite inadequate and the entire appeal of the play lies in the brilliance of its dialogue.

Action in Act I: - Hardly anything happens in the entire play. In terms of action, The Importance of Being Earnest is a flimsy play." In Act I, for instance, the only action consists in the following developments Jack Worthing's visit to Algernon's flat ; the arrival of Lady Bracknell and her daughter Gwendolen for tea at the same place ; Jack's proposal of marriage to Gwendolen and her immediate acceptance of it Jack's inward decision to change his name to Ernest; Lady Bracknell's rejection of Jack as possible son-in-law after her interrogation of him and his confession that he does not know his parentage. Besides these incidents, we are also informed that while Algernon has invented an ailing friend by the name o Bunbury to serve as an excuse for his frequently

leaving the town to escape from its social activities, Jack has invented a younger brother by the name of Ernest in order to serve as an excuse for his leaving his country home in order to pay frequent visits to London.

Action in Act II: - In Act II the action consists in the following situations Cecily's finding an excuse for Miss Prism to go for a walk with Dr. Chasuble ; Algernon's arrival at the Manor House in disguise in order to get acquainted with Cecily, Jack's return home in mourning clothes ; Gwendolen's unexpected arrival at Jack's country home and the misunderstanding that takes place between her and Cecily ;Algernon's decision and the arrangements made by both Jack and Algernon for their christening by Dr. Chasuble ; and Algernon's refusal to leave Jack's house.

Action in Act III: - In Act III, the action consists in Lady Bracknell's arrival at the Manor House ; Lady Bracknell's approval of Cecily's marriage to Algernon but her continued disapproval of Gwendolen's marriage to Jack ; Jack's objection to Cecily's marriage to Algernon ; Lady Bracknell's interrogation of Miss Prism and the resolution of the main complication of the play.

The Wit and Humour in the Remarks of All the Characters: - Thus there is very little of what is called "plot" in this play and yet it is a play which holds the attention and the interest of the audience and the readers throughout. It is the humour and the wit of the dialogue which lends to the play its main interest. Each of the characters gives evidence of a brilliant wit in whatever be or she says. As all the characters are well-educated (even the governess Miss Prism has written a three-volume novel), the humour and the wit in the speeches of each is not of the unconscious variety. In other words, each character is conscious of his or her wit. But it must be kept in mind that none of the characters gives any sign of being aware that he or she is speaking in a witty manner. Another point to note is that the wit is not laboured but spontaneous and effortless. Witty remarks, statements, and comments flow from the lips of the various characters naturally. In fact, it is impossible for us, on a closer view, to believe that all the characters can possess such a fertile wit ; but in the theatre, or. even in the study, we hardly stop to question the talent for making witty remarks of which every character provides ample evidence. And, in any case, we know that we are reading what is known as an artificial comedy, and so it does not matter whether the possession of this gift of wit by so many characters is something convincing or not.

The Display of Wit By Algernon and Jack: - The comic and witty quality of the play becomes apparent to us in the very opening, dialogue which takes place between Algernon and his servant Lane. Even the servant amuses us by his remark that bachelors keep superior wines in their homes and that in married households the wine is rarely of a first-rate brand. Lane's remark about marriage leads Algernon to make a paradoxical statement which also amuses us. Algernon says that the lower orders of society should set a good example by showing a sense of moral responsibility so that the upper classes can learn something from them. This dialogue is followed by a much longer dialogue between Algernon and lack, and in the course of this dialogue we come across a large number of witty remarks to which both these characters make a contribution, though Algernon shows himself to be more witty than his friend. Algernon indulges in a lot of bantering talk in connection with the inscription on Jack's cigarette-case. One of the witty remarks that Algernon makes here is that girls never marry the men they flirt with. Jack makes a witty remark when he says that some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall, and that it is a matter which an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. Algernon makes another paradoxical and witty remark when he says that literary criticism should be left to people who have never been at a university. He makes yet another witty

remark by saying that the number of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous: Another witty remark comes from Algernon when he gives a twist to a well-known saying and modifies it by saying that in married life three is a company and two is none. Another paradoxical remark from Algernon is that people who are not-serious about meals are shallow-minded.

The Display of Wit By Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen: - Then Lady Bracknell and her daughter Gwendolen arrive, and we have some real fireworks. On being told by Jack that she is perfect, Gwendolen replies that she would not like to be perfect because perfection would leave no room for developments and because she intends to develop in many directions. Lady Bracknell makes a very witty remark when she says that Mr. Bunbury should make up his mind whether he is going to live or to die and that his shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. She also says that she does not approve of the modern sympathy with invalids, which is a paradoxical remark because generally one is expected to be sympathetic towards the sick and the ailing. Gwendolen's reaction to the name Ernest is highly amusing to us. It is indeed very funny that a highly sophisticated girl should find in the name Ernest something that inspires absolute confidence. It has always been her ideal, she says, to love some one of the name of Ernest. Lady Bracknell makes a very witty remark when, on seeing Jack kneeling. before Gwendolen, she says to him "Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture ; it is most indecorous." A witty remark which is also paradoxical is made by Lady Bracknell when she says that she does not approve of anything that interferes with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate, exotic fruit which should not be touched but should be allowed to remain intact. She thinks it fortunate that education in England produces no effect whatsoever on the people because, if it were to produce any effect, it would prove to be a serious danger to the upper classes. One, of Lady Bracknell's wittiest remarks is that to be born or bred in a handbag shows a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life reminding her of the worst excesses of "the French Revolution. This remark is amusing because of the extreme exaggeration implied in the comparison of a child's being found in a hand-bag with the worst excesses of the French Revolution. But, perhaps, the most hilarious remark that Lady Bracknell makes is that she and her husband cannot allow their "only daughter to marry into a cloakroom and form an alliance with a parcel."

More Witty Remarks By Algernon and Jack: - After Lady Bracknell has rejected Jack as a possible son-in-law and has then left, Jack makes a witty remark when he calls her a Gorgon, and adds that she is a "monster without being a myth". Jack makes another witty remark when, on being asked by Algernon if he has told Gwendolen the truth about his being Ernest in town and Jack in the country, Jack says that truth is not quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, and refined girl like Gwendolen. To this, Algernon replies wittily that the only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her if she is pretty and to make love to some other woman if the first one is unattractive. There is something comic in the very invention of an ailing friend by the name of Bunbury and a younger brother by the name Ernest. Referring to the invention of Bunbury, Algernon says that, if he had not invented this friend with extraordinarily bad health, he would not have been able to escape from his dinner-engagement with Lady Bracknell. Towards the end of Act I we again meet Lane who, on being told that he is a perfect pessimist, replies that he does his best to give satisfaction to his master, implying paradoxically that his pessimism should be a cause of satisfaction to his employer. Act I ends with Jack telling Algernon that the latter always talks nonsense and with Algernon replying that everybody talks nonsense and nothing but nonsense. Thus the whole of Act I is replete with witty paradoxes, sarcasms, ironical remarks, and amusing statements which have an epigrammatic quality.

Witty Remarks of Miss Prism, Cecily, and Gwendolen: - The wit shows no signs of dwindling in Act II. In the beginning of this Act, we find Miss Prism telling Cecily that she is not in favour of the modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice, which is certainly an amusing remark. Cecily makes an amusing remark when she says that memory records the things that have never happened and could not possibly have happened. This remark is also a paradox. Another paradoxical and witty remark is made by Cecily when she says that she does not like novels that end happily because such novels depress her much. Miss Prism makes a witty remark when, talking to Dr. Chasuble, she says that by remaining unmarried a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. We are greatly amused also when Dr. Chasuble claims that his sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful or distressing. He has preached this sermon at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festivals days. Of course, Dr. Chasuble does not say this in order to amuse anybody ; in fact, he is quite serious about what he is saying ; but he produces a comic effect, and the humour" here is unconscious. Miss Prism amuses us when she says that the news of the sudden return of Jack's younger brother who was supposed to have died is peculiarly distressing. Several other remarks made by Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism are also very amusing. Cecily makes a paradoxical and amusing remark when she says that it is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a brief space of time but that the absence of old friends can be endured without much difficulty. Cecily's whole account of how she had fallen in love with Algernon (who has come in the disguise of Jack's younger brother Ernest) and how she had become engaged to him is also extremely amusing and would make an audience roar with laughter. She also amuses us when she says that she would like to put down in her diary whatever words her lover has to speak to her in order to express his sentiments about her. Algernon makes a very witty remark when he says that half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are all called Algernon. Gwendolen makes a sarcastic remark to Cecily when, after Cecily has mentioned a spade, Gwendolen says : "I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different." Act II closes with Algernon again indulging in banter at the cost of Jack, and Jack ultimately groaning and sinking into a chair while Algernon continues to eat muffins.

Witty Dialogue in Act III: - Nor is Act III deficient in wit. Lady Bracknell, for instance, says that hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young and of physical weakness in the old. Speaking to Cecily, Lady Bracknell says that an experienced French maid would certainly bring about a lot of improvement in Cecily's hair and her way of dressing. She gives the example of Lady Lancing whom her own husband could not recognize after she had undergone the treatment by a French maid for three months. Jack here intervenes to say that after six months nobody could recognize that lady, which also is a witty remark. Lady Bracknell amuses us greatly when she says that she does not approve of mercenary marriages, giving her own example and pointing out that when she married Lord Bracknell she had no fortune of any kind. It is extremely amusing for us to hear Lady Bracknell say that she never allowed her lack of dowry to stand in the way of her marriage to Lord Bracknell. Another witty remark "made by Lady Bracknell is that thirtyfive is an attractive age for a woman to get married. London society, she adds, is full of women of the very highest birth who have remained thirtyfive for years. When Lady Bracknell refuses to give her consent to her daughter's marriage to Jack, Jack wittily says : "Then a passionate celibacy is all that any one of us can look forward to." Gwendolen makes a paradoxical and witty remark when, on being asked by Jack to wait for him, she says "If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life."

In short, although some of the situations in the play are certainly funny, it is the dialogue which keeps us laughing most of time.

"The Importance of Being Earnest-A perfect work of art."

Closely-Knit Plot : - At the very outset it must be pointed out that the appeal of The Importance of Being Earnest lies chiefly in its, dialogue which is distinguished by an abudance of wit and humour. There is undoubtedly little action in the play but whatever of it there is has been developed in a perfectly logical manner. Once we recognize that absurdity is the keynote of the play, we shall find no fault with the way the plot develops. The plot is certainly flimsy but it is closely-knit and skilfully constructed. For various reasons, this play is superior to the other plays written by Wilde, but one reason for its superiority is its excellent craftsmanship.

The Love-Affair of Jack and Gwendolen in Act I: - There are two major love-affairs, and one minor love-affair in The Importance of Being Earnest. Act I initiates one of the two major love-affairs, namely that of lack and Gwendolen. Jack has been visiting London under the assumed name of Ernest and it is by this name that he is known to Gwendolen. When the play opens, Jack is on another of his visits to London, and this time he proposes marriage to Gwendolen who readily accepts the proposal. Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell, however rejects Jack as a possible son-in-law after cross-examining him and being told that Jack's parentage is unknown.

Algernon's Bunburying: - A hint of the second major love-affair is dropped to us when Algernon, in response to his persistent questioning of Jack, learns that Jack has a ward by the name of Cecily, a very pretty girl of eighteen years of age, who is living with him at his country home under the charge of a governess by the name of Miss Prism. Algernon becomes very inquisitive about Cecily and expresses to Jack his desire to see her, but Jack replies that he will take very good care to see that Algernon does not meet Cecily who is excessively pretty and only eighteen. However, Algernon takes down Jack's country address when Jack tells it to Gwendolen, and Algernon overhears it. Algernon's taking down Jack's country address is an indication that he will find an opportunity to meet Cecily. Our feeling in this respect is confirmed when Algernon tells his servant to pack his luggage because he will be leaving London for the countryside on the following day. He calls this visit to the country as part of his "Bunburying".

The Mutual Interest of Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble in Each Other: - In Act II it is the love-affair between Algernon and Cecily which is initiated and which develops, but the other major love-affair, as also the minor love-affair (the one between Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble, the Rector), also develop simultaneously. In the beginning of Act II we are introduced to Cecily, Miss Prism, and Dr. Chasuble. Cecily has perceived Miss Prism's emotional interest in Dr. Chasuble and the Rector's emotional interest in Miss Prism. The mutual interest of Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble in each other is confirmed by their taking a walk together, and Miss Prism's suggesting to the Rector that he should get married in order to relieve his loneliness.

Cecily's Engagement to Jack: - Algernon now appears at Jack's country house and introduces himself to Cecily as Jack's younger brother by the name of Ernest who is supposed to be a rather wicked fellow and who therefore often gets into difficulties. But just then Jack returns home from his visit to London and, not knowing that Algernon is already there under the assumed name of Ernest, says that his younger brother has

died. This situation is very funny, indeed. On being told that his younger brother by the name of Ernest is in the house, and very much alive, Jack feels very annoyed with Algernon and would like Algernon to go away but Algernon who has already fallen in love with Cecily has no intention to leave. Finding an opportunity to be alone with Cecily, Algernon proposes marriage to her, and she promptly responds to the proposal, saying that she has already been engaged to him for the last three months because she bad fallen in love with him as soon as her guardian had mentioned him to her.

The Deception Practised By the Two Men: - The two major love-affairs are now brought into a close relationship with each other when Gwendolen unexpectedly arrives at Jack's country house in order to meet the man whom she knows under the name of Ernest. There is a misunderstanding in the minds of both Cecily and Gwendolen because they think that it is the same man called Ernest who has proposed marriage to both of them. The misunderstanding is, however, soon cleared, but both the girls feel annoyed with their respective lovers for having deceived them with regard to the name Ernest.

The Solution of the Mystery of Jack's Parentage: - In Act III the difficulty that had arisen in connection with the name Ernest is removed when the two girls decide to forgive their lovers. But another complication now arises. Lady Bracknell too arrives at Jack's country house, having come to know that her daughter Gwendolen had fled from London in order to meet her lover Jack. Lady Bracknell has no objection to her nephew Algernon marrying Cecily, but she persists in her objection to Jack as her would-be son-in-law and does not agree to Gwendolen's marrying Jack. At this, Jack declares that, as Cecily's guardian, he will not agree to Cecily's marrying Algernon unless Lady Bracknell first agrees to her daughter Gwendolen's marrying Jack. Lady Bracknell, however, is in no mood to give her consent to Gwendolen's marriage to Jack. Just then Dr. Chasuble appears and happens to mention the name of Miss Prism. The mention of Miss Prism startles Lady Bracknell, and she demands that Miss Prism be summoned to her presence. On being questioned by Lady Bracknell, Miss Prism gives an account of how she bad, twentyeight years ago, committed the blunder of putting a baby in a hand-bag which she had deposited in a railway cloak-room instead of putting the baby in the perambulator. This baby was no other than Jack. The mystery of Jack's parentage is thus solved, and it is found that Jack is Lady Bracknell's own nephew and the elder brother of Algernon. Lady Bracknell now can have no objection to her daughter's marrying Jack.

The Interweaving of the Plots: - The interweaving between the two main love-affairs is thus perfect. Algernon could not marry Cecily unless Lady Bracknell permitted Gwendolen to marry Jack ; and Lady Bracknell permits Gwendolen's marriage to Jack only when it is discovered that Jack is Lady Bracknell's own nephew. The subsidiary love-affair, the one between Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism, is also brought into a close relationship. with the two major love-affairs because Miss Prism, who is Cecily's governess, was at one time serving as a nurse in Lady Bracknell's household and was looking after Lady Bracknell's nephew, Jack or Ernest. Not only that, it is Dr. Chasuble who comes and mentions the name of Miss Prism which arouses Lady Bracknell's curiosity and makes her summon Miss Prism to her presence. Wilde's craftsmanship is thus evident in the inter-connection and inter-dependence of the two main plots, and the close connection of the subsidiary plot with the two main plots.

The Parallelisms in the Play: - An important aspect of the construction of this play is the use of parallelism. Jack has invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that he might be able to go to London as often as he likes in order to meet Gwendolen and also for a change to relieve the monotony of his life at his country residence. In the same way Algernon has invented a valuable permanent invalid called

Bunbury in order that he might be able to go down into the country whenever he pleases in order to escape from the social whirl of London and especially from the boring dinner-parties of his aunt, Lady Bracknell. This is one example of parallelism. Another example is to be found in the reaction of Gwendolen and Cecily to the name "Ernest". Both girls become almost rapturous over this name. Both find that this name is one which inspires absolute confidence. It had been Gwendolen's ideal to marry someone by the name Ernest, and it had been the girlish dream of Cecily to do the same. Yet another example of parallelism -is that both Gwendolen and Cecily maintain diaries, though for different reasons. Gwendolen keeps her diary with her on bet railway journeys in order to be able to read something sensational, while Cecily records in her diary what she calls "the wonderful secrets" of her life as well as the words of praise of her beauty spoken by her admirer Algernon. Yet another example of parallelism is the readiness of both Jack and Algernon to acquire, the name of Ernest and to undergo the ceremony of christening or rechristening in order to do so, even though it is eventually found .unnecessary for either of them to undergo that ceremony.

Deceptions in the Play: - The construction of the play rests also on a series of secrets and the disclosure of those secrets. Deception and deceit are the basis of most comedies, and The Importance of Being Earnest is no exception. Not only do Algernon and Jack deceive their beloveds with a false name, but Lady Bracknell also proves to be a tricky woman because it is by bribing Gwendolen's maid-servant that she finds out where Gwendolen has gone. Miss Prism too is guilty of deception, because she has been hiding for nearly thirty years the secret of her misdeed in having placed the baby in a hand-bag. The wealth of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew is a secret which remains a mystery till the end. Nor is little Cecily above deceit, though of a petty kind, as when she tells Gwendolen that her engagement is to be announced in the local newspaper. Even the life of Lane, the, servant, is not above suspicion.

The Interest of the Dialogue: - It is also noteworthy that every dramatic element in this play has been subordinated to dialogue. There are no doubt a number of comic situations such as Algernon's continuing to eat muffins despite Jack's protests, Jack's return home in mourning clothes and his announcing the death of his supposed younger brother, the two girls thinking that they are engaged to the same person, Dr. Chasuble's preparations for the two christening ceremonies, and so on. But it is the dialogue which is of supreme importance in this play. In connection with the dialogue it is necessary to point out that it is a judicious mixture of long and short speeches. There are many speeches consisting of no more than two to four lines, and there are a number of speeches consisting of as many as eight to twelve lines. Such a judicious mixture is also an important aspect of the construction of the play.

The Importance of Being Earnest - Satirical Comedy of Manners

"No woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating."

"The play, though extremely funny, was essentially hateful", observed George Bernard Shaw (My Memories of Oscar Wilde), and a possible reason for his aversion is its farcical nature. The Importance of Being Earnest is ostensibly a farce, that poor cousin of true comedy which may have had its provenance in Aristophanes and the subsequent Roman comedy, but which never found a secure play in the respectable comic genre. The farce is notorious for its lack of plausible plot, its mechanical actions, and its puppet - like characterization and finally its general lack of intensity. It is only Oscar Wilde and Pinero

who, among the English play wrights made a serious attempt at farce, being able to rehabilitate this sub - genre to a considerable degree. Indeed, in his so - called farcical play like Lady Windermere's Fan, A woman of No Importance , and The Importance of Being Earnest , Wilde is able to create a new kind of comedy which straddles the mid - point between farce and comedy , possessing the sheer playfulness of the one and the intellectual alacrity of the other , the mechanical plot of the one and the imaginative utopian land of the other , the flat characterization of the one and the grave satiric thrust of the other. The Importance of Being Earnest is therefore a farce, rather than a farcical comedy sui generis.

The primary feature of a farce is its improbability plot consisting of number of parallel or symmetric actions. The foremost of such action in The Importance of BeingEarnest is, of course the device of such 'Bunburyism'. Jack, the country squire invents a fictitious wicked brother by the name of Earnest, living in the city, in order to escape from the routine - bound monotonous. Life in the country - side; similarly, Algernon, The city - gentleman creates an invalid friend by the name of Bunbury in the country - side in order to escape from the responsibilities of his city - lifer. Jack falls in love Gwendolyn in the city under the name of Earnest, whereas Algernon falls in love with Jack's ward Cecily in the country under the same assumed name of Earnest. So a strangely parallel situation is created in which both the lovers assume the same name Earnest, and the both beloved think that they are in love with a man with the name Earnest. As in farce, a serious of vaudeville actions follow the two ladies call each other sister until they realize that they are both in love with Earnest, whereupon they turn into bitter enemies. Both the lovers try to be re - christened as Earnest, and both realize to their chagrin that the beloved have discovered their actual identities, chasms reigns supreme.

The presence of undimensional characters, characters noteworthy for their static, unchanging quality, is another significant feature of farce. The Importance of Being Earnest is no exception. Its bevy of character including Algernon, Gwendolyn and Cecily and Mir Prism, Lane and Merriman, are all characterized by an idea fixe, a fixed idea which does not change throughout their lives. The sole ambition of Gwendolyn's life is to fall in love with a person by the name of Earnest since it is a ' divine name ' has 'music' of its own and produces 'vibrations '. Similarly Cecily's be - all and end all in life is to fall in love with a wicked person because that would provide her with adventure and romance , Therefore she feels extremely aggrieved when she suspects Algernon of actually being a good character . Indeed, she accuses him of hypocrisy, so that ultimately Algernon averse he has been 'very bad' in his own small way.

In spite of his marionette characterization and improbable plot, The Importance of Being Earnest reveals the genuine quality of high comedy in its creation of truly romantic word in which everything is parable, somewhat like, Puck - led world of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The play has indeed the nature of a fantasy where seriousness to be abandons for flamboyant frivolity, all anxieties for the sake of food, Algernon does when his beloved Cecily abandons him. An air of innocence pervades the whole play and the tale since desires for the innocent eyes of a child looking at the multi - hued world where everything is probable and nothing improbable. It is as if were a day dream where neither truth non lie, neither good nor evil has any impact.

The Importance of Being Earnest may have been castigated for its frivolous wit, but often times these flippant witticisms take on the note of genuine wisdom - a quality germane to true comedy. When Algernon declares that the emergence of romance is uncertainty , he is hinting the very unconventional psychological reality about man being in love with only that which he does not normally achieve or attain , for at the least he

does not feel very secure about . In contrast to the usual adage that “marriages are made in heaven ", he declares that” divorced are made in heaven ", implying thereby many marriages in those days, born out of societal convenience and aristocratic status, actually make marriages a bondage, a slavery. Such suggests of wisdom abound in the play.

Satiric vision, it is said, is the most important aspect of high comedy. Although the casual reader or audience may not be able to perceive the satire beneath the fickleness, The perceptive would realize that concealed within the triviality and fantasy is seriousness and satire as John Hankins pointed out in " Wilde as a dramatist, paradoxical as it may sound in the case of so merry and lighthearted play, The Importance of Being Earnest is artistically the most serious work that Wilde produced for the theatre." Through the irresponsible statement of the aristocratic classes, it is the aristocrat themselves. Who are being attacked? Their speeches reveal their inner emptiness and the follies of the decadent society of the late 19th century. At the same time, somewhat like Shaw himself the dramatist heaps scorn on such hallowed institutions as marriage, birth, baptism, romance, love and perhaps human life itself.

Wilde himself might have called this play “a trivial comedy for serious people ", but this playful comment conceals the greater truth that the play is a revelation of the triviality of seriousness. It is of such a profound if iconoclastic truth, the force attends the status of comedy.

Irony in The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

The play The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde is full of irony. Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, the protagonists in the play, get themselves into a complicated situation called Bunburyism (as Algernon refers to it). They pretend to be someone that they are not to escape their daily lives. They lie to the women they admire and eventually the truth is unveiled.

The irony comes into play when the truth starts to unravel and Jack finds out what really happened to him as a child and why he does not know his parents. After some coincidental events, all the main characters end up in the same room. When Lady Bracknell hears Ms. Prism’s (the woman Jack hired as his nieces governess) name she immediately asks to see her. She continues to say that Ms. Prism had wandered off with a baby years ago and asks what came about of that. Ms. Prism continues the dialog to explain how she misplaced a baby that was in her bag at a train station. Jack, thinking he might have been that very baby, retrieves the bag he was found in as an infant in which Ms. Prism identifies by some distinguishing marks to have been her own. Jack realized the woman that had been teaching his niece was his mother. But then Lady Bracknell explained that she was not but Lady Bracknell’s poor sister Mrs. Moncrieff was.

The irony continues to explain how Jack and Algernon were biological brothers. They were pretending to be earlier to play out their game of Bunburyism. Jack had told everybody he had a brother in which was he used as his justification to leave his home in the country and visit his "brother" in the city. Algernon pretends to be Jack brother "Earnest" in order to win over Jack beautiful "niece" Cecily.

> Jack- "Algy’s elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily- how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother." (pg. 305)

Jack's reaction shows evidence of his happiness of his new found brother. The same man that played his brother in their mind games with friends and family.

But the irony does not stop there. Jack told Gwendolyn, the woman he loved, that his name was Earnest. He lived the life of his "brother" Earnest in the city that happened to include her. But in the country, Algernon pretended to be Earnest to the woman he had admired. Both women were attracted to the name Earnest and were extremely disappointed that they were not named it. But as it turned out their father's name was Earnest. Because Jack was the eldest brother he finds out that his father had given him his name. So after all the lies and cover-ups, Jack's real name is Earnest.

This play is full of irony. It is written remarkably comical and almost absurdly. Wilde did a superior job at writing this play with an amusing story line filled with humor and satire. A man who made up a lie to find out that it was not really a fabrication, it was reality. We cannot get any more ironical than that.

Satire in The Importance of Being Earnest

The importance of being earnest by Oscar Wilde uses satire to ridicule the cultural norms of marriage love and mind-set which were very rigid during the Victorian Age. Because it uses satire to ridicule these instituitions, it shows the deviance from the social order by making ridiculous the ideas of standards, morals and manners. By trying to correct the flaws of the characters in this play, this piece also serves as a great form of critiscim. "The play really owes something to the restoration comic tradition."

Wilde was a master at the art of turning the English language around to fit his sarcastic themes and in this play he accomplished that to a high level. The title of this piece is even a play-on-word "Earnest" which can mean two different things. It can mean the obvious and be the actual characters name, but it also can mean a sense of seriousness and he then conveys that seriousness into reality for the characters. The two main characters in the play, Jack and Algernon, made every effort to be "Ernest" and "Earnest" in the play. They start their relationship based on the lies in the hope of marrying the girls that they love. There is irony in the play when they both call themselves "Earnest", a name that suggests honesty and sincerity, yet they both create stories to escape something or the other. Jack creates a brother called "Ernest" in the city that he uses as a 'scape goat' to leave his prim and proper, respectable country life, whereas Algernon creates a friend by the name of "Bunbury" to escape his aunt's high class society parties. He shows his lack of interest in such social events when he tells Jack,

"She will place me next to Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner table. That is not very pleasant. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public." (Wilde, 533)

The Importance of Being Earnest focuses on two main couples, Jack and Gwendolen and Algernon and Cecily. Both Gwendolen and Cecily yearn to have a husband called "Ernest." They both place emphasis on such a trivial matter as a name. When Jack attempts to tell Gwendolen that his name is really "Jack" and not "Ernest" she replies saying, "Jack"... No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed." (Wilde,537) The only really safe name is Ernest." Wilde deliberately uses farce in the play to exaggerate the mind frame of the upper class. It is seen here that Gwendolen loves Jack, but she places greater importance on silly, superficial and trivial matters such as a name, something a person has no control over. Similarly, Cecily also dreams of loving someone called "Ernest." She clearly states to Algernon, "There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest."(Wilde,556).

Again, Wilde is satirizing the institution of marriage, as it is not based on love, but on more vain superficial criteria. Although in this case there is exaggeration used to satirize the vanity of the aristocrats, Wilde still brings across the point that both Gwendolen and Cecily may have refused to marry the 'men of their dreams' if their names weren't 'Ernest.'

In Act Three of the play when Cecily asks Algy if he would wait until she was thirty-five years to be married (Wilde,570), even though Algy says yes, Cecily bluntly tells him she cannot. ."..I couldn't wait all the time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It makes me rather cross."(Wilde,570) One would think that after dreaming so much of the man she claims to love, waiting to be married will be a small favour to ask. In fact, Wilde

uses another couple, Miss Prism and Mr. Chasuble as a foil to show the contrast between a relationship built on love and one built on other materialistic, shallow values. Miss Prism seems to be the only woman who doesn't have an ulterior motive in the play when comes to marriage and love. Even Algernon seems to have ulterior motives. He has never met Cecily before, yet when he sees her, he instantly falls in love with her. Furthermore, his negative views on marriage in the opening scene, where he refers to it as 'demoralising,' seem to suddenly change when he meets Cecily. It can be inferred that Algernon's bankruptcy influences his attraction to Cecily. Both Jack and Algernon are determined to get themselves christened in order to hold on to Gwendolen and Cecily. That also shows some level of vanity in the men as they are not even slightly perturbed that the women place so much emphasis on their names. These couples seem to be wearing masks as they all appear one way, but seem to have some ulterior motives behind their actions. Gwendolen and Cecily both appear as ladies when they first meet, calling each other sisters, "My first impressions of people are never wrong." Yet when they believe that they're engaged to the same "Ernest," there is immediate coldness between them. Gwendolen satirically says to Cecily, "I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different." (Wilde,559) This is called 'dissembling' as the characters aren't literally wearing masks, but metaphorically they are all pretending to be someone they aren't. There is the division between truth and identity and it shows that sometimes certain laws in society force people to lead double lives.

Lady Bracknell is the driving force behind the plot of The Importance of Being Earnest. She represents women of the Victorian upper class society and believes that those of high class should be the ones in power. She has very little opinion of those with no title, or money and views the upper class society as being a 'closed club.' In other words, most people don't deserve to be in it unless they were born into it. She appears as a guardian of society in that she forcefully dictates who should marry who in the play. In the first scene, Gwendolen is unable to defend herself from wanting to marry Jack when he proposes to her. Lady Bracknell firmly steps in saying, "Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, will inform you." Lady Bracknell is portrayed as a forceful character who leaves no room for opposition. Even though Gwendolen wants to oppose her, she hasn't the strength to do so. Wilde uses Lady Bracknell to show a typical aristocrat who bends no rules of the upper class society.

One example where he shows how values are inverted and emphasis is placed on more trivial matters is the scene where Lady Bracknell meets with Jack to discuss Gwendolen. In this scene we see that in stead of asking Jack if he loves Gwendolen (which would seem to be the most important question); Lady Bracknell focuses on the materialistic side of it. She questions Jack about his money, land, house and the area in which he lives. She makes it clear that it's important for Jack to have a house in the town because Gwendolen cannot live in a country house. It is also seen here that Lady Bracknell treats the trivial things seriously, even though she's supposed to be an upholder of the values of society. However, little attention is paid to moral values. In stead, Lady Bracknell is displeased with the side of which Jack's town house is located- the unfashionable side. She thinks that everyone's interest will be similar to hers and subtly tells him, "The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However that could easily be altered."

The entire way in which Lady Bracknell meets with Jack is as though she is of a superior

being than him. She takes down his answers to her questions in a notepad, as though it's an interview rather than a personal meeting with her daughter's love. The setting of the meeting reflects how Lady Bracknell views marriage. It's more like interviewing someone for the job of being Gwendolen's husband rather than getting to know the man her daughter is interested in. Upon the shock that Jack was found and he doesn't know who his real parents are, Lady Bracknell immediately dismisses him, especially when she finds out that he was found in a handbag.

The farce continues when she tells Jack, I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

This is an extremely impossible request of Lady Bracknell, as it is obvious that Jack has no knowledge about his real parents. Although he knows that he desperately wants to marry Gwendolen, he doesn't hide his amazement upon Lady Bracknell's request, "Well I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment." This simply highlights how trivial the important things are to Lady Bracknell and how important the trivial things are to her. This is a major point Oscar Wilde focuses on in this comedy of manners- values are totally reversed.

Another example of Lady Bracknell's ignorance of the non-aristocrats is seen where she is ready to turn a blind eye to Cecily, when she hears that Algernon is engaged to her. She immediately judges Cecily based on the fact that Jack is her guardian. However, her views instantly change when Jack tells her that Cecily has a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in funds, "A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her." Once again emphasis is placed on a person's wealth rather than their personality, sincerity, or compassion for the other. Marriage is viewed as an economic factor, whereby people marry for wealth or to conserve wealth in their families, especially Lady Bracknell who represents the guardian of an upper class society. She is however a hypocrite and uses social morals to her convenience. For example, she refuses to let Jack marry Gwendolen because of his social background, yet she tries to justify a broke Algernon marrying the wealthy Cecily. Her social hypocrisy is highlighted when she also confesses that she was not rich when she married her husband. "Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. When I married to Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind." She furthermore thinks that her status gives her the right to approve of the marriage between Cecily and Algernon without asking Jack what he thinks. Eventually, both sides come to an agreement and Jack's name turns out to really be Ernest and he's really Lady Bracknell's nephew. Wilde gives the typical happy ending where everyone lives happily ever after and the stern mask that Lady Bracknell wears slowly turns into a smile.

In conclusion, The Importance of Being Earnest strongly focuses on those of the upper class society and the vanity of the aristocrats who place emphasis on trivial matters concerning marriage. Both Algernon and Jack assume the identity of "Ernest" yet ironically, they both are beginning their marital lives based on deception and lies. Lady Bracknell represents the archetypal aristocrat who forces the concept of a marriage based on wealth or status rather than love. Through farce and exaggeration, Wilde satirically reveals the foolish and trivial matters that the upper class society looks upon as being important. As said earlier, a satiric piece usually has a didactic side to it. In this case, Lady Bracknell learns that the same person she was criticising is actually her own flesh and blood.

Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon

The Importance of Being Earnest : Comedy of Manners

A comedy of manners is a descriptive term applied to a play whose comedy comes from social habits of a specified society. The play normally bases on the dominant members of the society. The social habits involve the manners and the morals practiced in the specified society. The play normally features the conduct and social status of the upper classes in a given society and how they interact with the lower classes. In most cases, the lower classes interact with the upper classes by taking roles as servants, trade people and other responsibilities as such. Therefore, I think this play can only act in a hierarchical society with a population of different classes and social status.

The importance of being earnest is referred to as a comedy of manners because it ironically describes the conduct of the Victorian upper class. The play describes their behavior in a hypocritical manner. The play seems to be making fun of them. The upper class individuals are described as money minded, superficial as well as artificial. The play uses satirical language to turn their values upside down and make us laugh considering the way they judge things by appearance. A language that is funny and witty has also been used to describe the upper class of the Victorian society. The main themes that the play bases on are love, identity, marriage as well as money. Wilde who is the author of the play had an intention of exposing the norms and values of the upper class individuals of the Victorian society and to prove them as shame. The fact is that besides the society stressing on values like respectability, decency and seriousness, its practices are totally different from these values. In order for any marriage to take place, the involved parties must be certified in terms of wealth as well as family background. From the play, we find that lady Bracknell rejected the marriage between Gewendolin and Jack simply because Jack was foundling. During her conversation with Jack, the lady gave priority to the family background without considering the education and other abilities that Jack had. She even did not consider the love that existed between Jack and Gewendolin. When she notices that Cecily's account has a lot of money, she predicts that the cash must have come from her boyfriend Algernon and stands ready to support their marriage. Therefore, it is the beauty of the boyfriend's name that makes him qualify as a candidate for marriage other than his qualities and abilities. Both Cecily and Gewendolin are ready to marry their boyfriends only because of their name "earnest" as opposed to what they feel for them. They seem to be driven by the notion that has long existed in their society which requires them to be married by men from capable and financially stable backgrounds. To them, wealth is a key requirement for marriage. "The play describes them as people who find everything in the name and love for name" (Wilde 84).

On the other hand, the men prefer to be associated with the name earnest but they seem to lack seriousness. The play bases on this to mock the upper class society that only values the surfaces and the appearances but not what is contained inside. They believe that everything that glitters is gold. This is very hypocritical. Considering the dialogue used in the play, we find it to be very witty and funny. If you consider the surface conversation between the characters, you will find it to be very beautiful and sweet but the inside is very hollow. The level to which the author has used paradox and irony in description of the conduct and behavior of the Victorian upper class society really tells us a lot about the pretensions and the artificiality of this kind of class. "Therefore, The Importance of Being Earnest is a comedy of manners because it employs light hearted language to evoke laughter at the false values of the Victorian upper society" (Wilde 97).This demonstrates a great level of discrimination against class and social status and this is one of the reasons why the play can only act in a hierarchical society with a population of different classes and social status.

Considering world historical contexts of this play to show continuities and changes over time, the importance of earnest is a comedy of manners that is derived much less in a specified history. There are several historical contexts that support the above underlined thesis of this play. The play views several historical contemporary events that demonstrate a troubled hierarchical society that has similar characters just like the ones portrayed in the play itself.

Considering some of the mentioned topics in the play, we can relate them to some of the world political issues that have been incorporated into history and still prevails today. One of them is the issue of Ireland home rule. In the year 1986, it was noted that William Gladstone came up with a great controversy where by he led the British Liberal party while under the frame work of the British Empire to back up support for the self rule form of governance. Since this home rule bill was contentious, the House of Lords later suppressed it by refusing to vote for its approval and enactment. This historical context happened only some few years before the play was released. Of course the main reason why the House of Lords failed to pass the bill was because the bill was meant to bring freedom to the less privileged members of the society. Being the upper class of this society, the House of Lords intentionally had to suppress the bill so that the lower class members remain servants to them. This was to cut any interaction as well as freedom links that might crop up. This type of behaviors is same as that of some characters in the play like lady Bracknell. She believes that ladies from the Victorian upper society are only supposed to be married by earnest men but not any other man. She does everything possible to make sure that there is no interaction between the upper and lower classes of the Victorian society just like the House of Lords did in Ireland when a home rule was to be enacted.

Considering a historical event like US civil rights movements, you will find that the political policies that were enacted discriminated against the blacks. In this context, the whites considered themselves as the upper class part of the American society. They treated the blacks as the lower class members of the same society. The whites enhanced laws on racial segregation which gave them freedom to publicly discriminate the blacks. Considering the transit system, the blacks were forced to occupy the back seats while the whites occupy the front seats. The blacks were denied some of their rights including leadership and voting. Therefore, the upper class did not allow any form of association with the lower class. They wanted the blacks to play a role as their servants. This is the same thing that was happening in the play. The upper class society did not encourage any marriage relationship with people whose background was not same as theirs. They abolished any links that could associate them with the lower class individuals. This historial context also proves that this play can only act in a hierarchical society where there is a division between the upper and the lower class. The play will make fun of their behavior since satire is the only tool to fight a loosing battle ("Historical Background" 1).

The main reason why the characters in the play get so upset with politics is because it tends to destruct the comfort and the hierarchical lifestyle that they are used to in the society. They see politics as a threat that can bring revolution and continuity change just like the French revolution that continuously hanged over the British society. When lady Bracknell hears of the sudden death of imaginary Bunbury who died in the explosion, she says that she was not aware that he was a victim of revolutionary outrage. She says that this was a fair punishment for him for being involved in the social legislation. This demonstrates the fear of social unrest that the upper class Victorian society had following any sign of revolution and social legislation that might see the rights of the poor respected.

Lastly, as the 19th century was coming to an end, England was one of the countries that witnessed cultural and artistic change considering the values that were in place during the reign of Queen Victoria. There was wide touting of values like self help and respectability during the boom times of 1860s and 1870s. When the farming practices underwent a change, the whole society was affected and very few people could help themselves. The farmers suffered a lot after the wheat fields had been converted to cattle pastures. As the farmers were struggling, the upper class society members who were industrialists enjoyed a lot by gaining lots of profits from their factories and employing the lower class individuals at cheap wages. These factory owners and some businessmen formed links to come up as middle class. As they did this, they raised their social status by settling in the country side just to imitate the aristocracy. They did this so that their social status can be recognized and bring some form of hierarchy within the society just like the Victorian society in the play ("Historical Context" 1). Indeed this play can only act in a hierarchical society with a population of different classes and social status.

Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon

Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad; 1857-1924

Joseph Conrad grew up in the Polish Ukraine, a large, fertile plain between Poland and Russia. It was a divided nation, with four languages, four religions, and a number of different social classes. A fraction of the Polish-speaking inhabitants, including Conrad's family, belonged to the szlachta, a hereditary class in the aristocracy on the social hierarchy, combining qualities of gentry and nobility. They had political power, despite their impoverished state. Conrad's father, Apollo Korzeniowski, studied for six years at St. Petersburg University, which he left before earning a degree. Conrad's mother, Eva Bobrowska, was thirteen years younger than Apollo and the only surviving daughter in a family of six sons. After she met him in 1847, Eva was drawn to Apollo's poetic temperament and passionate patriotism, while he admired her lively imagination. Although Eva's family disapproved of the courtship, the two were married in 1856.

Instead of devoting himself to the management of his wife's agricultural estates, Apollo pursued literary and political activities, which brought in little money. He wrote a variety of plays and social satires. Although his works were little known, they would have tremendous influence on his son.

A year into the marriage, Eva became pregnant with Joseph, who was born in 1857. The Crimean War had just ended, and hopes were high for Polish independence. Joseph's family moved quite a bit, and he never formed close friendships in Poland.

After Apollo was arrested on suspicion of involvement in revolutionary activities, the family was thrown into exile. Eva developed tuberculosis, and she gradually declined until she died in 1865. The seven-year-old Conrad, who witnessed her decline, was absolutely devastated. He also developed health problems, migraines and lung inflammation, which persisted throughout his life. Apollo too fell into decline, and he died of tuberculosis in 1869. At age eleven, Joseph became an orphan.

The young boy became the ward of his uncle, who loved him dearly. Thus began Joseph's Krakow years, which ended when he left Poland as a teenager in 1874. This move was a complex decision, resulting from what he saw as the intolerably oppressive atmosphere of the Russian garrison.

He spent the next few years in France, mastering his second language and the fundamentals of seamanship. The author made acquaintances in many circles, but his "bohemian" friends were the ones who introduced him to drama, opera, and theatre. In the meantime, he was strengthening his maritime contacts, and he soon became an observer on pilot boats. The workers he met on the ship, together with all the experiences they recounted to him, laid the groundwork for much of the vivid detail in his novels.

By 1878, Joseph had made his way to England with the intention of becoming an officer on a British ship. He ended up spending twenty years at sea. Conrad interspersed long voyages with time spent resting on land.

When he was not at sea, writing letters or writing in journals, Joseph was exploring other means of making money. Unlike his father, who abhorred money, Conrad was obsessed by it; he was always on the lookout for business opportunities.

Once the author had worked his way up to shipmaster, he made a series of eastern voyages over three years. Conrad remained in the English port of Mauritius for two months, during which time he unsuccessfully courted two women. Frustrated, he left and journeyed to England.

In England in the summer of 1889, Conrad began the crucial transition from sailor to writer by starting his first novel, Almayer's Folly. Interestingly, he chose to write in English, his third language.

A journey to the Congo in 1890 was Joseph's inspiration to write Heart of Darkness. His condemnation of colonialism is well documented in the journal he kept during his visit. He returned to England and soon faced the death of his beloved guardian and uncle. In the meantime, Conrad became closer to Marguerite, an older family friend who was his closest confidant. For six years he tried to establish intimacy with her, but he was eventually discouraged by the age difference and the disparity between their social positions.

Then, 1894 was a landmark year for Conrad: his first novel was published; he met Edward Garnett, who would become a lifelong friend; and he met Jessie George, his future wife. The two-year courtship between the 37-year-old Conrad and the 21-year-old Jessie was somewhat discontinuous in that Conrad pursued other women during the first year of their relationship, but his attention became strongly focused on Jessie by the autumn of 1895. Garnett disapproved of the match, especially since Jessie was miles behind Joseph in education. Nonetheless, they married in March 1896.

The children who followed the union were not warmly welcomed by their father; an absent-minded sort, he expressed surprise each time Jessie delivered a baby. His days were consumed with writing, a struggle no doubt exacerbated by the gaps in his knowledge of the English language.

The major productive phase of Conrad's career spanned from 1897 to 1911, during which time he composed The Nigger of the Narcissus, Youth, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostromo, The Secret Agent, and Under Western Eyes, among other works. During this period, he also experienced serious financial difficulties, often living off of advances and state grants, there being little in the way of royalties. It was not until the publication of Chance in 1914 that he experienced some level of commercial success.

As the quality of his work declined, he grew increasingly comfortable in his wealth and status. Conrad had a true genius for companionship, and his circle of friends included talented authors such as Stephen Crane and Henry James.

Still always writing, he eventually returned to Poland, and he then travelled to America, where he died of a heart attack in 1924 at the age of 67. Conrad's literary work would have a profound impact on the Modernist movement, influencing a long list of writers including T.S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, Andre Gide, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner.

Heart of Darkness : Plot Summary

Heart of Darkness opens on the deck of the yawl, Nellie, which is anchored along the Thames awaiting the return of the tide. Five individuals are on her deck, each exchanging a few lazy words. There is the owner of the boat, a lawyer, an accountant, the narrator -- who remains ambiguous in profession, and Marlow, the only one of the group who still works at sea. Looking to the river, Marlow describes what it must have been like for ancient travelers to Britain and how the area must have seemed like the end of the earth. He ponders how they tackled the "darkness" and overcame the "mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, [and] in the hearts of wild men" (Conrad 69). He then tells the group about his time spent as a fresh-water sailor -- his time in the "darkness."

He explains how he had just returned to London after life on the sea in the Far East, and how he became tired of his long vacation and tried to find another ship. His aunt knew of an ivory trade company in Africa and suggested he inquire. His aunt's influence paid off and he became employed as a steamboat captain on the Congo River.

He departed from Europe on a French steamer down the coast of Africa. The ship he was on seemed to make an infinite amount of stops. On these stops, Marlow became entranced by the endless coastline and the isolation created by the unfamiliar people. When the boat would stop and the black men would come out to trade with the ship, Marlow was fascinated by their presence and the reality they seemed to convey in contrast to the dreamlike features of his journey so far. Marlow realized his journey would be anything but normal. "For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts; but the feeling would not last long" (p. 78).

Marlow's journey on the French steamer came to an end at the river's mouth, where he transferred to a river boat commanded by a Swede. The captain told Marlow of the corrupted government and country he was entering, and he added that an earlier passenger of his hanged himself up river for no apparent reason. Nearly one hundred miles upriver, the boat landed at the company's Outer Station. The station was littered with abandoned equipment rusting away in the grass. Accompanying the valuable equipment were groups of black workers chained to each other and the dead bodies of others. Marlow was troubled at the sight before him.

Marlow moved up to the company buildings where he met the company's chief accountant. His dress was immaculate as were his quarters -- a complete contrast to the confusion that defined the rest of the station. Here, Marlow learned of a man named Kurtz for the first time. The man told Marlow that Kurtz was an amazing man who was in charge of the inner, and most important, station. He said that it wouldn't be long before Kurtz made it into administration, as he had sent more ivory down river than any other agent.

After spending ten long days at the Outer Station, Marlow headed toward the Central Station over land with a caravan of sixty blacks and a white man. Fifteen days and two-hundred miles later, Marlow made it to the station exhausted from his journey. Adding insult to injury, he discovered his awaiting steamboat at the bottom of the river. The manager of the station made no acknowledgment of Marlow's long journey and went on and on about the wreck and how it would take three months to get it running again. The manager began talking about Kurtz and how no one knew if he was dead or alive.

Marlow quickly determined that the manager "was a chattering idiot" (p. 89) and not worth his time, so he isolated himself from those who resided at the station. He decided to focus all of his time toward raising the steamboat. While he was there, however, he noticed the "pilgrims," white men who carried staffs and constantly spoke of the ivory trade, and he couldn't help overhear the constant talk of Kurtz.

One evening, the brick maker of the station invited Marlow to his room. The agent's quarters were a marvel compared to the rest of the station, just as the accountant's had been at the Outer Station. It did not take long for Marlow to realize the agent's motive. He was trying to extract information about Marlow's influential friends and sources back in Belgium. The agent was convinced Marlow knew of the company's plans for Kurtz, as Marlow and Kurtz shared recommending sources. Marlow revealed nothing and instead questioned the agent about Kurtz after discovering a painting by him. The agent expected a promotion for Kurtz soon, but said nothing more. Marlow soon realized the agent resented Kurtz, as he continued to pry information out of him.

Later, Marlow told the agent that he needed rivets to repair the steamboat. Weeks passed, but there were no rivets. Marlow knew that supply convoys came in from the Outer Station, and he knew there were rivets there as he had almost tripped on bags of them earlier. The only supplies that came, however, were cheap trade goods. Marlow, demanded rivets, but the agent acted indifferently towards his "forgetfulness."

As Marlow continued to wait, a group known as the Eldorado Exploring Expedition came into the station. The group was headed by the manager's uncle. One evening, as Marlow was lying in the shadows on the deck of the steamer, he overheard a conversation between the manager and his uncle. He discovered the manager had purposefully neglected to send supplies to Kurtz's Inner Station. A clerk of Kurtz's, while delivering a shipment of ivory, informed the manager that Kurtz was ill, and from then on, no news was heard from him again.

Finally, after months of waiting, rivets arrived. Marlow repaired the steamboat and began his journey upriver with a crew of about twenty natives, a few of the "pilgrims," and the manager. They progressed slowly over two months and encountered many native villages along the way. Marlow was determined to get to Kurtz and discover for himself the true nature of the man. The journey was difficult for "the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, [and] the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it" (p. 107).

A few miles from the Inner Station, after clearing through a snag, the steamer was showered with arrows. Chaos ensued as men from the boat "squirted lead into the bush" (p. 117). Marlow's helmsman was killed in the attack, and a few of the crew were wounded. Speculation of whether Kurtz was still alive at this point was abundant. The manager, who became frightened by the attack, insisted they turn around. Just as he said this, however, the Inner Station came into view.

When they pulled to the bank, they were greeted by a rather peculiar looking Russian. He told Marlow that Kurtz's health was failing, so the manager and the "pilgrims" headed out to find him and return him to the steamer. Marlow discovered from the Russian that Kurtz, without goods to trade with, had rounded up his recent supplies of ivory at gunpoint. He had become a god to the surrounding natives, and the Russian later informed Marlow that Kurtz was the one who ordered the attack on the steamer. When Marlow asked why, the Russian responded, "They don't want him to go" (p. 126). The Russian, who was obviously devoted to Kurtz, was nearly shot by Kurtz as he was aiding him to recovery.

When the group found Kurtz, he was in horrible physical condition, but his speech was amazingly strong. They carried him to the steamer under the watchful eyes of the natives, who seemed to silently protest the move. An ominous looking woman in the tribe stood out from the woods and made her presence known to the group.

Later that night, Marlow discovered Kurtz had escaped from the steamer. After locating him, Marlow carefully approached him. Kurtz was watching the natives perform one of their ceremonies, and Marlow saw the apparent torment Kurtz experienced. Marlow carried him back to the steamer, and they set out downriver the next day.

As they traveled down river, Marlow watched Kurtz's decline, and he developed a kind of partnership with him. Kurtz entrusted his private papers and a photograph of a woman to Marlow, because he knew anyone else would exploit his findings. Not long after, Kurtz died speaking his final words, "The horror! The horror!" (p. 147), and was buried in the jungle.

After the event, Marlow returned to Europe to recover from an illness. A few men inquired information on Kurtz's papers, but he denounced their value and told them they were for his mourning love. Marlow took the papers to the woman, who was in obvious pain and distress over her loss of Kurtz. She questioned Marlow intently, but he evaded her questions as he did not have truthful answers about the man he hardly knew. He could not get Kurtz out of his mind, though, and thought constantly of Kurtz's situation

and how he had separated himself from the world into an entirely different existence. Marlow ended the woman's sorrow by assuring her that her name was Kurtz's last word. Marlow was incensed that he lied to the woman, but did nothing and left her.

Finally, the scene returns to the present deck of the Nellie where silence ensues with the end of Marlow's story. The men share no feelings of the emotional story they have just heard and are more or less indifferent. They just sit afloat on the Thames, which seems to flow into the endless "darkness" of the horizon.

"Heart of Darkness" : A Critical Appreciation

Conrad's agonizing Congo experiences of 1890 were re-worked nine years later into Heart of Darkness which is generally regarded as one of the greatest short novels in the English language.

It is a crucial work in the development of modem literature, in that it establishes the dominant theme of twentieth-century writing: fear and disillusion about the western man's place in the world and the values by which he lives. The narrator and central character, Marlow, travels up the Congo to meet the demonic trader, Kurtz. He witnesses the violence and hypocrisy of his colonizing culture and his faith in the western world, and even his own sanity is threatened.

Heart of Darkness is based upon **Conrad's own experiences** of the Belgian Congo when he visited that country in the year 1890. It is a largely personal and autobiographical book. Being based upon what Conrad actually witnessed during his travels through what he calls the "heart of darkness", the book has the stamp of authenticity. Knowing Conrad's integrity as a writer, we have to accept Heart of Darkness as a truthful account of the conditions in which the savages of the Congo, a country of the dark continent of Africa, lived under the imperialist rule of the white man, and also a truthful account of the behaviour and the attitudes of the white men who went to that country as traders or as the agents of a trading company, or as explorers. The fictitious character called Marlow, who narrates the story, is Conrad himself in disguise. Most of the experiences of Marlow, and most of Marlow's reactions to what he beheld in the Belgian Congo, were Conrad's own experiences, observations, and reactions.

The **theme** of Heart of Darkness is the **conditions** prevailing in the Congo under the **imperialist** rule of the Belgian KingLeopald II. These conditions include the impact of the white traders and explorers on the life of the African savages, and the influence of the native way of life on the white men, with special reference to one man who is given the name of Kurtz. (Kurtz is a German word meaning "short"). There is another theme also which is equally important for the thoughtful reader i.e.**reality versus dream**. As Marlow voyages to the Belgian Congo by a French steamer, he observes closely the sights on the coast and falls into a meditative mood. The sights which he witnesses now, and those which he beholds subsequently, appear to him to be half real and half unreal. The unreality of these sights becomes the basic condition of Marlow's experiences.

Heart of Darkness is **replete with symbolism**. The very **title** of the novel has a symbolic meaning, in addition to its literal meaning, Literally, "Heart of Darkness" means the interior of a dark country, namely the Congo. Symbolically, the title means the depths of the human mind or the human consciousness. The book describes not only **Marlow's** exploration of the Congo but also his exploration of his own mind and of the deeper layers of his mind. Then there are other symbols in the novel also. The women, knitting wool, symbolize the Fates of ancient classical mythology. Mr. **Kurtz**, who is the dominating character in the novel, is a symbol of the modem western man's lust for power and pelf. The chief accountant of the Belgian trading company is as telling an image of modem man as the demonic Mr. Kurtz and there are other symbolic suggestions in the novel also.

Heart of Darkness is a **remarkable** book by virtue of its **imagery** also. Conrad here gives us ample evidence of his **descriptivepowers**. The imagery in this book is **remote** and **wild**; but it is described in such a **graphicmanner** that we begin actually to visualize it. There are, first of all, the sights which Marlow witnesses along the coast as he sails by a French steamer. Then there are the sights which Marlow witnesses on landing from the Swedish captain's sea-going steamer. These are memorable sights indeed. We can never forget the boiler lying uselessly in the grass, the steep path, and the several pieces of decaying machinery and the rusty rails, the blasting of the rock, the clanking of the chain-gang criminals, and so on. Soon afterwards, Marlow feels as if he had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno and thus the description and the imagery continue throughout the novel.

Heart of Darkness is a profound book. Part of its **profundity** is due to its **philosophicalcharacter** and to the writer's **psychologicalinsight**. There are a large number of philosophical passages in the book. Marlow is not only a man of action and an adventurer, but also a thinker and a kind of philosopher. He tends to reflect and meditate upon whatever he observes and beholds. At the very time of setting out on his voyage, he makes the remark that he felt for a second or two as though, instead of going to the, centre of a continent, he was about to set off for the centre of the earth Now, this is a philosophical remark, though not a deeply philosophical one. Soon afterwards, he makes the remark that, as he entered into a grove near the Company's first station, he felt as if he had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. But a more philosophical remark comes when he says that, at one point, in the course of his experience, he found it difficult to distinguish between reality and dream. When the brick-maker is talking to Marlow about Kurtz, Marlow feels that he does not at this moment see Kurtz. In fact, it seems to him at this time that he is seeing a dream and experiencing a dream-sensation. Then Marlow goes on to make the following philosophical observation: **"It is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence that which makes its truth, its meaning, its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream alone".**

There is also plenty of **psychological analysis in Heart of Darkness**. In the course of his narration, Marlow gives us a peep into the minds of the various characters, at the same time making it possible for us to look into his own mind as well. Much of the interest of this book lies in its psychological studies of the various characters. For

instance, Marlow gives us a penetrating portrayal of the chief **accountant** of the Company. That man is able to maintain a neat and tidy appearance even in the midst of the chaotic conditions around him. Everything at the station is in a muddle (disorder), but the accountant's clothes and his account-books are being excellently maintained. Similarly, Marlow gives us a penetrating portrayal of the **manager** of the Central Station. He makes a significant remark when he says that perhaps there was nothing "within" the manager, and that, after commenting upon the effect of the climate on the white visitors to this region, the manager smiled in a manner which showed as if his smile had been a door opening into a darkness which the manager had in his keeping. Again, Marlow enables us to look into the working of the **brick-maker's** mind. Marlow quickly perceives that the brick-maker wants to know exactly where Marlow stands in relation to the higher officials of the Company which has sent him to the Congo. But it is in his descriptions of **Kurtz** that Marlow shows his real psychological insight. He skilfully, subtly, and effectively brings to our notice **Kurtz's passion for ivory**, Kurtz's passion for power, Kurtz's influence over the savages, Kurtz's secret ambitions, Kurtz's surrender to the rites and customs of the savages, Kurtz's love for his "intended", and so on. Indeed, we are able to form a comprehensive picture of Kurtz's moral character and his mental make-up' though Kurtz still remains a mysterious figure to us.

Heart of Darkness is an interesting **mixture of the traditional and the modem** in several ways. The Company's doctor, who examines Marlow before Marlow leaves for the Congo is, for instance, very much a modem figure. This doctor is something of a psychiatrist, having an interest in analysing the mental changes of individuals. The sciences of psychology and psychiatry are modern sciences which were being developed in Conrad's own time. And Marlow, in the course of his narration, himself shows a keen interest in tracing the mental processes of the various persons with whom he comes into contact. At one point in the story; Marlow speaks of the mental change going on within himself. Here he remarks that he was becoming a fit subject for scientific study by a psychologist. Furthermore, Marlow experiences a feeling central to the literature of modernism. He experiences the anarchy and the futility of modem life. He keenly experiences the truths of the modern western world whose products include its colonialism and a sense of racial superiority. The "powers of darkness" to which Marlow refers at one point are the powers of European culture to which Kurtz belongs, and which Kurtz had imbibed. In this context Marlow says that Kurtz would be claimed by the powers of darkness to whom he really belonged. These powers of darkness, according to one interpretation, are the influences of European culture on Kurtz: **"All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."** The trader Kurtz is a demonic person who writes and speaks with inspiring eloquence but who yet performs rites of unspeakable savagery. **Kurtz** is also the **embodiment of the colonial appetite** for **possessions** and **power**. At the same time this story has to be read as a myth. The mythical elements in it belong to tradition. There are the two ominous women knitting black wool who suggest the Fates of classical mythology. There is Marlow's journey through a certain region of the Congo which resembles Dante's Inferno. Such elements in the novel suggest that it should be read as we read a myth. Thus looked at, the novel would seem to be a statement on the timeless problems of mankind in its existence on the planet known as the earth.

Heart of Darkness has an **unusual kind of structure**. Conrad was an innovator so far as the structure of most of his novels was concerned. The structure of Heart of Darkness is very complex. In the first place, there are two narrators in this novel. The first narrator appears before us at the very beginning of the book. It is this first narrator who tells us about the boat "Nellie"_ lying anchored in the river Thames and about the men on the deck of this boat. It is this first narrator who introduces to us the second narrator. While the name of the first narrator is not given to us, the second narrator's name is given as Marlow or Charles Marlow. Now, the real story comes from the lips of this second narrator; and yet the first narrator also, intervenes occasionally in the course of the novel. This mixing up of the two narrators confuses the average reader. It is not really necessary for a novelist to adopt a device of this kind except as a point of departure from the traditional way of telling a story.

Heart of Darkness is a**masterpiece of an unusualkind**. It is a profound book, and it is at the same time a starkly realistic book. It excels both in respect of external description and imagery, and in respect of its analysis of the mental processes of its characters and its probing of the conscious and the sub-conscious mind.

Heart of Darkness : Main Ideas Explained

Alienation and Loneliness: - Throughout Heart of Darkness, which tells of a journey into the heart of the Belgian Congo and out again, the themes of alienation, loneliness, silence and solitude predominate. The book begins and ends in silence, with men first waiting for a tale to begin and then left to their own thoughts after it has concluded. The question of what the alienation and loneliness of extended periods of time in a remote and hostile environment can do to men's minds is a central theme of the book. The doctor who measures Marlow's head prior to his departure for Africa warns him of changes to his personality that may be produced by a long stay in-country. Prolonged silence and solitude are seen to have damaging effects on many characters in the book. Among these are the late Captain Fresleven, Marlow's predecessor, who was transformed from a gentle soul into a man of violence, and the Russian, who has been alone on the River for two years and dresses bizarrely and chatters constantly. But loneliness and alienation have taken their greatest toll on Kurtz, who, cut off from all humanizing influence, has forfeited the restraints of reason and conscience and given free rein to his most base and brutal instincts.

Deception: - Deception, or hypocrisy, is a central theme of the novel and is explored on many levels. In the disguise of a **''noble cause,''** the Belgians have exploited the Congo. Actions taken in the name of philanthropy are merely covers for greed. Claiming to educate the natives, to bring them religion and a better way of life, European colonizers remained to starve, mutilate, and murder the indigenous population for profit. Marlow has even obtained his captaincy through deception, for his aunt misrepresented him as **''an exceptional and gifted creature.''** She also presented him as **''one of the Workers, with a capital [W] ... something like an emissary of**

light, something like a lower sort of apostle,'' and Conrad notes the deception in elevating working people to some mystical status they cannot realistically obtain. At the end of the book, Marlow engages in his own deception when he tells Kurtz's fiancée the lie that Kurtz died with her name on his lips.

Order and Disorder: - Conrad sounds the themes of order and disorder in showing, primarily through the example of the Company's chief clerk, how people can carry on with the most mundane details of their lives while all around them chaos reigns. In the larger context, the Company attends to the details of sending agents into the interior to trade with the natives and collect ivory while remaining oblivious to the devastation such acts have caused. Yet on a closer look, the Company's Manager has no talent for order or organization. His station is in a deplorable state, and Marlow can see no reason for the Manager to have his position other than the fact that he is never ill. On the other hand, the chief clerk is so impeccably dressed that when Marlow first meets him he thinks he is a vision. This man, who has been in-country three years and witnessed all its attendant horrors, manages to keep his clothes and books in excellent order. He even speaks with confidence of a Council of Europe which intended Kurtz to go far in **''the administration,''** as if there is some overall rational principle guiding their lives.

Sanity and Insanity: - Closely linked to the themes of order and disorder are those of sanity and insanity. Madness, given prolonged exposure to the isolation of the wilderness, seems an inevitable extension of chaos. The atmospheric influences at the heart of the African continent—the stifling heat, the incessant drums, the whispering bush, the mysterious light—play havoc with the unadapted European mind and reduce it either to the insanity of thinking anything is allowable in such an atmosphere or, as in Kurtz's case, to literal madness. Kurtz, after many years in the jungle, is presented as a man who has gone mad with power and greed. No restraints were placed on him—either from above, from a rule of law, or from within, from his own conscience. In the wilderness, he came to believe he was free to do whatever he liked, and the freedom drove him mad. Small acts of madness line Marlow's path to Kurtz: the Man-of-War that fires into the bush for no apparent reason, the urgently needed rivets that never arrive, the bricks that will never be built, the jig that is suddenly danced, the immense hole dug for no discernible purpose. All these events ultimately lead to a row of impaled severed human heads and Kurtz, a man who, in his insanity, has conferred a godlike status on himself and has ritual human sacrifices performed for him. The previously mentioned themes of solitude and silence have here achieved their most powerful effect: they have driven Kurtz mad. He is presented as a voice, a disembodied head, a mouth that opens as if to devour everything before him. Kurtz speaks of **''my ivory … my intended … my river … my station,''** as if everything in the Congo belonged to him. This is the final arrogant insanity of the white man who comes supposedly to improve a land, but stays to exploit, ravage, and destroy it.

Duty and Responsibility: - As is true of all other themes in the book, those of duty and responsibility are glimpsed on many levels. On a national level, we are told of the British devotion to duty and efficiency that led to systematic colonization of large parts of the globe and has its counterpart in Belgian colonization of the Congo, the book's focus. On an individual level, Conrad weaves the themes of duty and

responsibility through Marlow's job as captain, a position that makes him responsible for his crew and bound to his duties as the boat's commander. There are also the jobs of those with whom Marlow comes into contact on his journey. In Heart of Darkness, duty and responsibility revolve most often about how one does one's work. A job well done is respected; simply doing the work one is responsible for is an honourable act. Yet Conrad does not believe in romanticizing the worker. Workers can often be engaged in meaningless tasks, as illustrated in the scene where the Africans blast away at the rock face in order to build a railway, but the rock is not altered by the blasts and the cliff is not at all in the way. The Company's Manager would seem to have a duty to run his business efficiently, but he cannot keep order, and although he is obeyed, he is not respected. The Foreman, however, earns Marlow's respect for being a good worker. Marlow admires the way the Foreman ties up his waist-length beard when he has to crawl in the mud beneath the steamboat to do his job. (Having a waist-length beard in a jungle environment can be seen as another act of madness, even from an efficient worker.) Section I of the novel ends with Marlow speculating on how Kurtz would do his work. But there is a larger sense in which the themes of work and responsibility figure. Marlow says, **''I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—the chance to find yourself.''** It is through the work (or what passes for it) that Kurtz does in Africa that his moral bankruptcy is revealed. For himself, Marlow emerges with a self-imposed duty to remain loyal to Kurtz, and it is this responsibility that finally forces him to lie to Kurtz's fiancée.

Doubt and Ambiguity: - As reason loses hold, doubt and ambiguity take over. As Marlow travels deeper inland, the reality of everything he encounters becomes suspect. The perceptions, motivations, and reliability of those he meets, as well as his own, are all open to doubt. Conrad repeatedly tells us that the heat and light of the wilderness cast a spell and put those who would dare venture further into a kind of trancelike state. Nothing is to be taken at face value. After the Russian leaves, Marlow wonders if he ever actually saw him.

The central ambiguity of Heart of Darkness is Kurtz himself. Who is he? What does he do? What does he actually say? Those who know him speak again and again of his superb powers of rhetoric, but the reader hears little of it. The Russian says he is devoted to Kurtz, and yet we are left to wonder why. Kurtz has written a report that supposedly shows his interest in educating the African natives, but it ends with his advice, **''Exterminate all the brutes!''** Marlow has heard that Kurtz is a great man, yet he suspects he is **''hollow to the core.''** In Marlow's estimation, if Kurtz was remarkable it was because he had something to say at the end of his life. But what he found to say was **''the horror!''** After Kurtz's death, when various people come to Marlow representing themselves as having known Kurtz, it seems none of them really knew him. Was he a painter, a writer, a great musician, a politician, as he is variously described? Marlow settles for the ambiguous term **''universal genius,"** which would imply Kurtz was whatever one wanted to make of him.

Race and Racism: - The subject of racism is not really treated by Conrad as a theme in Heart of Darkness as much as it is simply shown to be the prevailing attitude of the day. The African natives are referred to as ''**niggers**,'' ''**cannibals**,'' ''**criminals**,''

and ''**savages**.'' European colonizers see them as a subordinate species and chain, starve, rob, mutilate, and murder them without fear of punishment. The book presents a damning account of imperialism as it illustrates the white man's belief in his innate right to come into a country inhabited by people of a different race and pillage to his heart's content.

Kurtz is writing a treatise for something called the **''International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs.''** This implies the existence of a worldwide movement to subjugate all non-white races. Kurtz bestows a kind of childlike quality upon the Africans by saying that white people appear to them as supernatural beings. The natives do, indeed, seem to have worshipped Kurtz as a god and to have offered up human sacrifices to him. This innocence proceeds, in Kurtz's view, from an inferior intelligence and does not prevent him from concluding that the way to deal with the natives is to exterminate them all.

Early in his journey, Marlow sees a group of black men paddling boats. He admires their naturalness, strength, and vitality, and senses that they want nothing from the land but to coexist with it. This notion prompts him to believe that he still belongs to a world of reason. The feeling is short-lived, however, for it is not long before Marlow, too, comes to see the Africans as some subhuman form of life and to use the language of his day in referring to them as ''**creatures,'' ''niggers,'' ''cannibals,'' and ''savages**.'' He does not protest or try to interfere when he sees six Africans forced to work with chains about their necks. He calls what he sees in their eyes the ''**deathlike indifference of unhappy savages.''** Marlow exhibits some humanity in offering a dying young African one of the ship's biscuits, and although he regrets the death of his helmsman, he says he was **''a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara.**'' It is not the man he misses so much as his function as steersman. Marlow refers to the **''savage who was fireman''** as **''an improved specimen.''** He compares him, standing before his vertical boiler, to **''a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs.''**

Violence and Cruelty: - The violence and cruelty depicted in Heart of Darkness escalate from acts of inhumanity committed against the natives of the Belgian Congo to **''unspeakable''** and undescribed horrors. Kurtz (representing European imperialists) has systematically engaged in human plunder. The natives are seen chained by iron collars about their necks, starved, and beaten, subsisting on rotten hippo meat, forced into soul-crushing and meaningless labour, and finally ruthlessly murdered. Beyond this, it is implied that Kurtz has had human sacrifices performed for him, and the reader is presented with the sight of a row of severed human heads impaled on posts leading to Kurtz's cabin. Conrad suggests that violence and cruelty result when law is absent and man allows himself to be ruled by whatever brutal passions lie within him. Consumed by greed, conferring upon himself the status of a god, Kurtz runs amok in a land without law. Under such circumstances, anything is possible, and what Conrad sees emerging from the situation is the profound cruelty and limitless violence that lies at the heart of the human soul.

Moral Corruption: - The book's theme of moral corruption is the one to which, like streams to a river, all others lead. Racism, madness, loneliness, deception and disorder, doubt and ambiguity, violence and cruelty—culminate in the moral corruption revealed by Kurtz's acts in the Congo. Kurtz has cast off reason and allowed his most base and brutal instincts to rule unrestrained. He has permitted the evil within him to gain the upper hand. Kurtz's appalling moral corruption is the result not only of external forces, such as the isolation and loneliness imposed by the jungle, but also, Conrad suggests, of forces that lie within all men and await the chance to emerge. Kurtz perhaps realizes the depth of his own moral corruption when, as he lays dying, he utters, **''The horror! The horror!''**Marlow feels this realization transferred to himself and understands that he too, living in a lawless state, is capable of sinking into the depths of moral corruption The savage nature of man is thus reached at the end of the journey, not upriver, but into his own soul.

Heart of Darkness : Significance of Title

"Heart of Darkness" is a short novel by Polish novelist Joseph Conrad, written as a frame narrative, about Charles Marlow's experience as an ivory transporter down the Congo River in Central Africa. The river is "a mighty big river, that we can see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land". In the course of his travel in central Africa, Marlow becomes obsessed with Mr. Kurtz. The phrase **"Heart of Darkness"** has two meanings. Literally, the title refers to the dark continent of Africa known as the Congo. **"Heart of Darkness"** is an appropriate title for the novel because Marlow describes his experiences of the interior region of the continent which was known as Congo. The events at the beginning and at the close of the novel occur outside Congo but the major and the most significant events of the story take place in the Congo and on the river Congo. The savages really belong to the heart of darkness.

There are other features of the novel too, justifying the title **"Heart of Darkness".** One such feature is the **description of the wild scenery of the thick, impenetrable jungle, and the suggestive picture of the natives not fully visible to the white men sailing over the river Congo**. At one point in the novel Marlow says that sailing up the river Congo was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world. He then refers to the great silence of the impenetrable forests where the air was warm, thick, heavy and sluggish. Marlow perceived no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine in that region. The long stretches of the water-way ran on into a mob of wooded islands. One could lose one's way on that river as one might lose one's way in a desert. The stillness prevailing there was not the stillness of peace but of a relentless force brooding over some mysterious purpose. Now, a description of this kind occurs later when Marlow tells us that the night came suddenly and seemed to strike him blind. Then, about three in the morning, Marlow heard a loud splash as though a gun had been fired. When the sun rose, there was a white fog, very warm and damp, and more blinding than the night. The fog remained there like something solid. A little later in the morning the fog lifted as a shutter lifts. Marlow then had a glimpse of the towering multitude of trees, of the

immense jungle, and of the blazing little ball of the sun hanging over it, all perfectly still. And then the white fog came down again. There are other descriptive passages of the same kind in the book, too.

The **barbarism of the natives** reinforces the effect of these descriptive passages and **intensifies the atmosphere of mystery and fea**r. Reading about the natives, we get an even stronger impression that we are in the midst of darkness. On one occasion, the natives, seeing Marlow's steamer sailing up the river, draw near the river-bank in order to launch an attack upon the intruders. Marlow on this occasion hears a muffled rattle, then a very loud cry. This cry gives rise to a feeling of terror in the hearts of all the white men. Then the attack by the natives actually begins. The white men then hit back by firing their rifles. In the fighting, the helmsman of the steamer is killed with a spear hurled at him by a native. It is the **backwardness** and the **ignorance** of the natives which **creates the effect of darkness**. The natives have merely attacked the steamer because they have received instructions to do so from their supremo, Mr. Kurtz. The personality of Mr. Kurtz is very important because it is he who sums up the whole essence of the barbarism and the savagery of the natives. Marlow has conveyed to us the demonic character of Mr. Kurtz by the use of highly suggestive phrases. Instead of civilizing the natives, Mr. Kurtz has himself become barbarian. Mr. Kurtz has begun to identify himself with the savages. He has been presiding over their midnight dances which always end with **"unspeakable rites"**. In Marlow's opinion, Mr. Kurtz has taken a high place among the devils of the land. He has been experiencing **"abominable satisfaction"**, and he has been gratifying without restraint his **"various lust"**. In short, Mr. Kurtz has become part of the darkness of the Congo.

The phrase **"Heart of Darkness"** has yet another meaning. It also stands for an exploration of the depths of Marlow's own mind or soul. The human mind may also be regarded as a kind of Dark Continent whose exploration is even more difficult than the exploration of Congo. The book called **"Heart of Darkness"** may be treated as a **journey** by Marlow into **his own sub-conscious mind or into the sub-conscious mind of all mankind**. The novel called **"Heart of Darkness"** is symbolically the story of an essentially solitary journey involving a profound spiritual change in the voyager. Marlow prepares us for such a journey at the very outset. But it is, at the same time, a **psychological** and **mysticaljourney**. Marlow also tells us indirectly that, by paying close attention to the surface reality of the story and its external details, we would be able to arrive at an **inner meaning**. Thus Conrad is here able to blend morality and adventure in a unique manner, as he has done in some of his other novels as well.

There are many passages in the course of Marlow's narration in which he gives us glimpses of his own mind. At one point he tells us in explicit terms that he has always hated and detested lies because he has always found a taint of death and a flavour of mortality in lies. In the same context, Marlow also says that it is not possible for any man to convey to others the life-sensation of any period of all existence. He says:**"We live, as we dream – alone."**

At another point Marlow says that the mind of **man is capable of anything** because everything is in it. In order to endure the stark realities of human life, a man should

possess an inner strength. What a man needs is a deliberate belief, at yet another point in the novel, Marlow tells us of the effect on his own mind of the savage sight of human skulls hanging from the tops of the posts fixed to the ground outside Mr. Kurtz's residence. Later, Marlow tells us of the effect on his mind of Mr. Kurtz's arguments defending his action in slipping away from the ship's cabin into the jungle. Towards the end of the novel, Marlow tells us the working of his own mind when several persons come to him, one after the other, claiming the packet or papers and the photograph which, Mr. Kurtz had given him for safe custody; and he also reveals to us the working of his mind when he goes the meet Mr. Kurtz's Intended. In all these cases, Marlow tells us not about his conscious thoughts but also tries to probe his sub-conscious mind. This subconscious mind is also the heart of darkness which Marlow or Conrad tries to explore.

Finally the **"darkness"** is many things: it is the unknown; it is the subconscious; it is also a moral darkness; it is evil which swallows up Mr. Kurtz and it is the spiritual emptiness which he sees at the centre of existence; but above all it is mystery itself, the mysteriousness of man's spiritual life.

Heart of Darkness : Theme of Evil

Evil has a tangible reality in "Heart of Darkness" and it dominates the novel manifesting itself in several ways. At the very outset Marlow refers to the ancient Roman conquest of Britain who used only brute force. They grabbed what they could get. It was just **"robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale".** Marlow then says that the conquest of any territory by any nation means the taking that territory away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than the conquerors. This talk by Marlow pertains to the evil of conquest, and to the brutality and the slaughter which any military conquest necessitates.

There is a hint of evil in Marlow's reference to the city of Brussels as a **"whitedsepulcher".** The phrase **"whited sepulcher"** means a place which is outwardly pleasant and righteous but which is inwardly corrupt and evil. The evil character of this city is emphasized when Marlow points out that the Belgian conquerors were running an over-sea empire in the Congo and making no end of coin by trade. Then there is a hint of evil in Marlow's description of the two women knitting black wool. "**In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly."**

These knitting-women remind us of the mythological Fates constantly busy in spinning the yarn of human destiny. They seemed to him to be guarding the door of darkness and knitting black wool as of to make a shroud. When Marlow is about to set out on his voyage, he feels that, instead of going to the centre of a continent, he is going to the centre of the earth. Such a remark also hints at the evil which exists in this universe.

Marlow's descriptions of the natural scenery which he witnesses in the course of his voyage have a strong suggestion of evil in them. Indeed, the wilderness and the thick forest seem to be the abode of evil. Marlow sees a huge jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black. The sun is fierce and the land seems to glisten and drop with steam. He

speaks of the empty stream, the great silence, and the impenetrable forest in which the air is warm, thick, heavy and sluggish. There is no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine here. "**And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake."**

Marlow's steamer penetrates deeper and deeper into the **"heart of darkness"** and the very earth seems unearthly. Marlow's narration heightens our sense of evil which is lurking in the forest behind the millions and millions of trees.

The other sights also suggest the existence of evil. At one point, Marlow sees a warship anchored off the coast and firing its guns without having any target in view. The firing seems to be absolutely aimless and futile. He sees several trading posts where **"the merry dance of death and trade" goes** on **"in a still and earthy atmosphere"** resembling that of an over-heated tomb. He sees a lot of people, mostly black and naked.**"A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants."**

At one place, a rock is being blasted with gunpowder even though this it does not stand in the way of the railway line which is to be laid. Then he sees the horrible sight of a chain-gang. Men in this chain-gang are criminals who have been sentenced to hard labour.

"I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking."

Marlow remarks that he had previously seen the devil of violence, the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire. He was seeing the **"devil of rapacious and pitiless folly".**

The white men, whom Marlow encounters in Congo, by no means provide any relief to Marlow. These men, cowardly civilized, are actually degenerate fellows. There is no goodness in them at all. The manager of the Central Station is a wicked fellow who can inspire neither fear, nor love, nor respect but only uneasiness. Marlow says that there was "nothing within" this man. The white agents are seen loitering about idly, talking maliciously and scheming against one another. The brick-maker is the manager's spy who keeps a watch upon the other white men at the Central Station. Marlow describes this man as **a "papier-mâché Mephistopheles"** meaning that his man is a veritable devil, but a follow kind of devil. The white men, who have come to civilize the natives, are only exploiters having no regard for the welfare of the savages.

Evil is the keynote of the latter portion of the novel in which Marlow records his impressions of Mr. Kurtz. He has been told that Mr. Kurtz is a **"remarkable man"** who is expected to rise at a very high position because he has been collecting more ivory than all the other agents taken together. Ivory had become a passion and an obsession with Mr. Kurtz which showsthe man's extreme greed. He has begun to identify himself with the native savages. He presides over their midnight dances which always end with **"unspeakable rites".** This means that he has begun to take pleasure in the shedding of the blood of human beings, in sexual orgies, in sexual perversions and in similar other practices. In short, Mr. Kurtz has become evil incarnate. Even when Mr. Kurtz is being

taken to Europe for medical treatment, he slips away from the ship into the jungle. When Mr. Kurtz is dying, he utters the words:**"The horror! The horror!"**

The portrayal of Mr. Kurtz is perhaps even more important in this novel for this portrayal of a civilized man is meant to convey Conrad's own ideas about evil. Conrad believes that there is much evil in the savages. He does not believe in the existence of the **"noble savage".** The barbarian customs of the savages are certainly horrifying to him. Because of his prolonged stay with the savages Mr. Kurtz become a devil. Conrad says that the western man should beware of falling a prey to the barbarism of the savages whom he conquers. Conrad depicts the savages in a favourable light too, but it is fully alive to the obnoxious customs of the savages and warns the western white men against the menace of those customs. Conrad's other message is that the white man should civilize the savages instead of exploiting them to fulfill his own greed.

Heart of Darkness: Theme of Self Restraint

Self-restraint (self-control) is certainly one of the themes of the novel **"Heart of Darkness"**. Self-restraint is only a subsidiary or secondary theme. This theme has been handled by Conrad very skillfully, and almost subtly, so that it does not project itself on our attention or undermine the other themes.

The **white men** who have gone to the Congo for trade show no **self-restraint** but **unlimited greed**. They are all there to **collect ivory**; and ivory has begun to **dominate** their **thoughts**. Ivory has become their **obsession**. The manager has begun to feel jealous of Mr. Kurtz because Mr. Kurtz collects more ivory than all the other agents put together. The desire of these men for ivory knows no bounds.

Then, all these men **seek power and authority**; and they show **noself-restraint** in this aim. The most striking example of greed is to be found in Mr. Kurtz who knows no self-restraint at all. Mr. Kurtz becomes the embodiment of the passion for ivory and for power. Many times he was heard saying:

"my ivory, my station, my intended, my career, my ..."

Indeed, Mr. Kurtz has become a **devil seeking wealth** in the form of **ivory** and **seekingpower** in the form of **controlover** the **natives**. He has collected all the ivory in the Congo. On one occasion he got ready even to kill his friend, the Russian, because he was having a small quantity of ivory which he did not wish to part with and which Mr. Kurtz had demanded from him. Mr. Kurtz's passion for power also knows no bounds. He has been acquiring more and more power over the savages till he has become in their eyes a god. If any native rebels against his authority, Mr. Kurtz has him executed. The time comes when nothing on earth can prevent him from killing whomsoever he wants to kill. And he still has more plans for his self-aggrandizement.

Nor does Mr. Kurtz show any **self-restraint** in the **satisfaction** of his **primitive** instincts which have begun to **dominatehim**. Mr. Kurtz has become an active sharer in

the demonic practices of the savages. He presides over their midnight dances which always end with "unspeakable rites" including sex-orgies, sadistic and masochistic practices, human sacrifice and other obnoxious acts. He indulgence in all such proceedings has assumed vast scope and has begun enjoying "abominable satisfactions". He now gives a free outlet to his "monstrous passions" in the company of the savages.

Mr. Kurtz shows no **self**-**restraint** even in his desire for **possessingthings** and for **owningthings**. Indeed, his sense of ownership and proprietorship has assumed abnormal proportions. He has developed a feeling that everything belongs to him. And yet there is emptiness in his soul. His mind is by no means insane, but his soul has certainly gone mad. He is "hollow at the core", as Marlow puts it. And yet this man is able to stir feelings of friendship and respect in Marlow. Here we are faced with a paradox.

There is also a **lack of self-restraint** in the **Russian** who has developed an attitude of worship towards Mr. Kurtz. The Russian, a highly intelligent and well-educated man, begins to adore Mr. Kurtz. According to the Russian, Kurt's has taught him many things and has enabled him to look into the essence of things. The Russian regards Mr. Kurtz as one of the immortals. Surprisingly Marlow himself develops an attitude of respect towards Mr. Kurtz. He has discovered that Kurtz is hollow at the core and has taken a high place among the devils of the land. And yet Marlow himself falls under Mr. Kurtz's influence. When Mr. Kurtz has slipped away from the ship's cabin into the forest, Marlow follows him to bring him back. Marlow writes:

"I did not betray Mr. Kurtz – it was ordained. I should never betray him – it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice."

Marlow also says that Mr. Kurtz had **conquered** his soul which is totally untainted by selfishness. Marlow interpret Mr. Kurtz's last words as indicative of Mr. Kurtz's victory over the evil within him. Thus we can safely affirm that even Marlow shows a **lack** of self-**restraint** in his feelings of **admiration** and regard for Mr. Kurtz.

This **theme of self-restraint finds expression** also in the manner in which Marlow has depicted the **cannibalcrew** on his **steamer**. These cannibals were very **hungry**, and they could easily have killed some of the white men on board the steamer and consumed their flesh but they **showed self-restraint**. **This self-restraint on the part of the cannibals is quite puzzling and highly commendable, though surprising.** In respect of self-restraint the cannibals score a **point over the civilized white men**. Even the white manager of the Central Station shows restraint in his mental make-up. He refrains from giving orders to Marlow and says that Marlow has the right to decide whether he should continue the voyage to the Inner Station or stop for a few hours to find out whether the savages would attack the steamer.

According to an eminent critic, restraint or self-restraint is a major theme in "Heart of Darkness". Mr**. Kurtz hasno restraint** because he has no urgent work to do and has no belief. Mr**. Kurtz's extremism and faith are the opposite of true belief which is needed to tackle darkness.** On account of this lack of moral equipment and his greed

of money and power, Mr. Kurtz is unable to cope with the forces of savagery and evil within him. Mr. Kurtz's only defence is his eloquence but this is not enough. These heads, stuck to the poles show that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts. The native helmsman, steering Marlow's steamer, also showed a lack of restraint which results in his murder.

"In fact nobody in the story has any real restraint except the most savage of all men, the half-starved cannibals on board the steamer who amaze Marlow by the fact that they restrained themselves from tucking into the pilgrims."

This true restraint on the part of the cannibals is incomprehensible to Marlow. Marlow's failure to solve this mystery and many other mysteries in the story is linked to a lack of restraint in the language which Marlow uses. Marlow occasionally employs excessive rhetoric, thus showing his lack of restraint in the use of language also.

Heart of Darkness : Theme of Isolation

"Heart of Darkness" has a multiplicity of themes interwoven closely and produces a unified pattern. The theme of isolation and its consequences constitute a theme in this book, though a minor one. **Marlow and Mr. Kurtz illustrate this theme**, dominate the novel and have symbolic roles. Both **thesemenstand** for **muchmorethantheindividuals** which they certainly are.

Marlow strikes us from the very start as a **lonely** figure. Although he is a member of a small group of people sitting on the deck of the streamer called the "Nellie". He is, at the very outset, differentiated from the others. He sits cross-legged in the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes without a lotus-flower. Then he begins his story, and nowhere in his narration does he appear to be feeing perfectly at home among other people. He seems to have the temperament of a man who would like to stay away from others, though he would certainly like to observe others and to mediate upon his observations.

When Marlow goes to Brussels for an interview, he depicts himself as an alien who has stepped into an unpleasant environment. The city of Brussels makes him think of a **"whited sepulcher".** This feeling clearly shows that he has nothing in common with the people of this European city, though he is himself a European. Then he finds something ominous in the atmosphere of the office of the Company. The two knitting-women strike him as mysterious and sinister beings. **"In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly."**

Even the doctor tells him that he is the first Englishman to have come under his observation. Marlow says: **'The old doctor felt my pulse, evidently thinking of something else the while. "Good, good for there," he mumbled, and then with a certain eagerness asked me whether I would let him measure my head.**

There seems to be a distance even between Marlow and his aunt who has got him the job. She is enthusiastic and cordial enough, but Marlow has his reservations. He thinks that she is a most unrealistic woman. She is under the impression that the white men go into the backward regions to confer benefits upon the savages. But, in Marlow's opinion, this view of the white men is entirely wrong.

When **voyaging** upon the sea in order to get to the Congo Marlow found himself to be perfectly **idle** and **isolated** from all the others on board the steamer because he had no point of contact with them. The sound of the sea-waves was the only source of comfort to him because these sounds seemed to be like "the speech of a brother". He finds a kinship with the sea-waves but no kinship with the human beings on board the steamer.

Marlow'ssense of **loneliness** increase when he sees certain **sightsin theCongo**. These sights convey to him the futility of the white man's exertions and activities in the Congo, and miseries of the black natives. His realization by him of white man's cruelty creates a kind of barrier between him and the white men living in Congo. When he has to deal with the individual white men, his isolation is further emphasized. He finds absolutely no point of contact with the manager of the Central Station, with the manager's uncle, and with the brick-maker. The manager is a man who inspires no fear, no love, no respect and there is "nothing within this man". The manager's uncle is an intriguer and plotter as the manager himself. The brick-maker is described by Marlow as a "papier-mâché Mephistopheles" and a devil who is hollow within. The only man, whom Marlow can respect, is the chief accountant who keeps his account-books in apple-pie order and is always seen dressed neatly and nicely; but perhaps Marlow is speaking here ironically. Actually none of the white men seems to have any merit in him. Marlow does discover some good points in the natives but none in the white men. The cannibal crew of his steamer shows an admirable self-restraint and are hard-working but the white agents seem to be useless fellows and to them he gives the nickname of the "faithless pilgrims". It is only when Marlow meets Mr. Kurtz that some sort of contact is established between him and the chief of the Inner Station of the Company.

The **effect of isolation** upon Marlow is **profound**. He is by nature somewhat unsociable. He is a kind of philosopher who meditates upon whatever he sees. Isolation further heightens his meditative faculty. Finding no point of contact with others, Marlow becomes more of a **thinker** and more of **aphilosopher**-**cum**-**psychologist** and studies the character and habits of Mr. Kurtz; and it is because of his isolation that he falls a victim to the influence of Mr. Kurtz whom he has himself described as a devil. This isolation can have grave consequences.

Mr. Kurtz is **anotherisolatedfigure**. He has become an **absolutelysolitary man** after his **prolongedstay** in the Congo. He is not solitary in the sense that he does not mix with other. In fact, he **has begun to identify himself with the savages and has become a sharer in their activities and in their interests**. He participates in their **"unspeakable rites"** and he gratifies, without any restraint, his various lusts and his monstrous passions.**"The wilderness has caressed him, loved him, embraced him, entered his blood, consumed his flesh and has taken complete possession of his soul."**

In the case of Mr. Kurtz, it is isolation which proves the man's undoing. Being **cut offfrom** all **civilized society** at the Inner Station of the Company, Mr. Kurtz begins slowly to fall **under the influence of the savage till he becomes one of them**. Gradually he acquires great power and begins to be regarded as a god by them. Thus now he has to keep himself at a distance even from them. He "**presides**" over their midnight dances which end with "**unspeakablerites**".

But he is a **solitary figure** in the context of his **western education and European upbringing**. Even among the savages, he stands far above them. The savages regard him as a man-god. Mr. Kurtz is indeed a deity for the savages, and therefore he is a solitary figure even among them. Perhaps the savage closest to him under these conditions is the native woman who is his housekeeper and also perhaps his mistress. But the evil within him has already acquired huge proportions. Thus **the effects of isolation in Mr. Kurtz's case are disastrous**.

Heart of Darkness : White Imperialism

Heart of Darkness is a short novel, and yet it has several themes. It is indeed strange that such a short book should deal with so many themes.

There is in this book the theme of self-restraint. Then there is the theme of the working of the sub-conscious mind of man. There is the theme of the exploration of a little-known continent. There is the theme of the influence of barbarism and primitivism on a civilized man when he is cut off from civilized society. And there is, of course, the obvious theme of the imperialist exploitation of a backward country. Thus Heart of Darkness is a masterpiece which, in its brief compass, deals with a number of important ideas. Conrad's treatment of the theme of white imperialism was influenced by his own visit to the Congo and his exploration of that dark country; and his rendering of Marlow's conscious and sub-conscious thoughts was also based upon his own reactions to what he had himself witnessed in the course of his travels through the Congo.

Marlow's Reference to the Ancient Roman Conquest of Britain: -The keynote of the theme of imperialism is struck at the very outset of Marlow's narration. Marlow speaks at the very beginning of the ancient Roman conquest ofBritain, and says that the ancient Romans were conquerors using brute force. The ancient Romans, says Marlow, grabbed what they could get. Their conquest of Britainwas "robbery with violence"; and the violence in this case meant murder on a large scale. The conquest of another country, says Marlow, mostly means the taking away all things from those who have a different complexion or who have flatter noses than the conquerors have. Such a conquest is unpardonable. What can, however, excuse such a conquest is the idea at the back of it: not a sentimental pretence but an idea, and an unselfish belief in the idea. What Marlow here wishes to say is that conquest can be excused only if the conquerors perform some constructive work in the backward country which they have conquered. Marlow here does not use the phrase "the white man's burden;" but he has evidently that concept in his mind. The white man certainly has a duty to the savages whom he dues, and whom he begins to govern. The test of the white man's intentions lies only in

his performance of this duty. If he fails in this duty, his government of the backward countries cannot be justified.

Ivory a Symbol of Imperialist Greed and Commercial Mentality: - Marlow's (or Conrad's) experiences in the Congo clearly show that the white man there had failed to perform his functions. Instead of civilizing the savages, the white men who went there became exploiters, pure and simple. The Congo was at that time being governed by the Belgian King, Leopold II; and the Belgian trading companies were sending their agents into the Congo for trading purposes. The chief commodity which these Belgians found worth their pains was ivory. Ivory was of no use to the natives, themselves, while the white men collected ivory and sent it to Europe where it could profitably be used for the making of numerous ornamental articles. Now, as we go through this book, we find that ivory is being constantly mentioned. Ivory dominates the thoughts of the manager of the Central Station, the thoughts of the brick-maker, the thoughts of the several white agents who loiter around the Central Station and to whom Marlow gives the name of "faithless pilgrims." Subsequently we find that ivory not only dominates the thoughts of Mr. Kurtz but has become an obsession with him. The manager of the Central Station tells Marlow that Mr. Kurtz collects more ivory than all the other agents taken together; and the Russian tells Marlow that, on one occasion, Mr. Kurtz had threatened to kill him if he did not surrender to Mr. Kurtz a small quantity of ivory which the Russian had received as a gift from a native tribal chief. Thus ivory becomes a symbol in the book. Ivory symbolizes the white man's greed and the white man's commercial mentality. The white man's chief concern in the Congo is to collect ivory and send it to Europe. The greater the ivory collected by an agent, the greater is his achievement in the eyes of his employers, and the higher is the promotion which he can expect Ivory, becomes a source of revenue to the trading company which can, therefore, afford to invest a lot of money in sending its agents into the Congo. Nowhere do we find any mention of any service being rendered by these white men to the natives of the Congo.

The White Man's Callousness towards the Natives: - The sights seen by Marlow, when he has got down from the Swedish captain's steamer, are of a very depressing kind. These sights depict the wretchedness and the misery of the natives of the Congo, and the sheer futility of the white man's seemingly useful work. Marlow sees a lot of black people, mostly naked, moving about like ants. Later he sees half a dozen men chained. to one another, and each wearing an iron collar on his neck. These men are criminals, who have violated the laws and are being punished with hard labour under the orders of the white rulers of the country. Marlow feels deeply upset to see this sight. Going further, he sees black figures crouching under the trees, leaning against the trunks, and clinging to the earth. These men, says Marlow, were dying slowly. These men were not enemies; they were not criminals; they were only black figures representing disease and starvation, and lying in a state of confusion in the gloom of the trees. Here Marlow feels as if he has entered into the gloomy circle of some inferno. Now, it is made obvious to us that the white man's indifference and his unconcern are responsible for this state of affairs. These sights have been described by Marlow in order to convey to us the callousness of the white man towards the natives.

A Waste of Time and Effort by the White Man: No Rivets: - Accompanying all these sights are a few others which clearly indicate the hypocrisy of the white men who are simply wasting time and effort to show that some kind ofconstructive work is going on. There is a project to build a railway line in this region. But Marlow sees that a rock is being blasted with gunpowder even though this rock does not stand as an obstruction in the way of the railway line. Likewise, he sees a boiler lying unused in the grass. Then he comes upon some pieces of decaying machinery, and a large heap of rusty rails. Similarly, before landing here, Marlow had seen a warship anchored close to the land, and firing its guns into the forest aimlessly. Marlow had found a touch of madness in this firing of guns to no purpose at all. Outwardly, of course, the warship was frightening away the savages; but actually it was merely a waste of ammunition. This waste of effort and the unused machinery lying in the grass offer a sharp contrast to the starving natives. The whole effort of the white man is completely misdirected. It is a sad commentary on the efficiency of the white man that Marlow should not be able to get any rivets to repair the wrecked ship for weeks when these are needed badly.

The Meanness and Pettiness of the White Colonizers: - The futility of the white man's endeavours in the dark country called the Congo becomes even more evident when we meet certain employees of the trading Company which has sent Marlow here. The manager of the Central Station has been described by Marlow in scathing terms. Marlow makes us despise this man who could inspire neither respect nor love nor fear, and who could inspire only uneasiness. Marlow found nothing within this man. Marlow's description of the brick-maker is equally satirical and critical. He describes the brick-maker as a "papier-mache Mephistopheles" because of this man's cunning. The brick-maker is here, but he makes no bricks. His function is to act as a spy for the manager. The men, who are loitering around the Central Station, are idlers having no work to do but only to gossip, to speak ill of one another, and to hatch intrigues. When the manager's uncle turns up as the leader of an exploring expedition, he turns out to be a seasoned schemer and plotter. The manager's mind is full of fear lest he should be superseded by Mr. Kurtz. If such are the colonizers in the dark continent ofAfrica, what possible benefit can they confer upon the savages there? Conrad conveys his strong disapproval and disapprobation of these white, men to us most effectively, so that we begin to look upon these white men with the greatest possible contempt.

The Shabby Treatment, Meted Out to the Black Crew: - It is equally disgusting for us to watch the manner in which the cannibal crew of Marlow's steamer are being treated by the white owners of the steamer. The cannibal crew are most efficient, hard-working, and sturdy fellows who deserve every possible encouragement. But the pity of it is that they are not fed properly. It goes to the credit of the cannibal crew themselves that they are exercising self-restraint and are not attacking the white men on board the steamer in order to kill them and eat their flesh. Thus the white men, led by the manager, are absolutely unconcerned about the welfare of the very men on whose labour and toil they depend. Without this cannibal crew the steamer could not have gone ahead at all; and yet the white bosses do not bother whether or not these men are properly fed.

The Lamentable Failure of Mr. Kurtz to Uplift the Savages: - Even Mr. Kurtz, who has begun to identify himself with the savages, and who had at one time held that the white man should confer huge benefits upon the backward people, has done nothing for the uplift of the natives. Instead of improving their mode of life, he has himself become a savage in their company. He has miserably failed to exercise any self-restraint, and has begun to satisfy his various lusts without any limit. Even in his prime of life, when he had supported the view about the white man's civilizing role, he had written down the following words conveying an opposite message: "Exterminate all the brutes." In fact, Mr. Kurtz has now become brutalized, and even dehumanized. Such is the irony of the achievement of Mr. Kurtz who had once upon a time believed that the white man could prove himself to be the Messiah of the natives.

Conrad's Exposure of the Belgian Imperialist Rule: - Heart of Darkness conveys to us in a 'nutshell the deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-trading, and general policy of cruelty of the Belgian rule in the Congo. There is an incident of fire in the story, and there is the long trek during which the natives have to carry a heavy load on their heads in the service of their white masters. The portrayal of the Company's chief accountant is in itself a grim commentary upon the white man who can afford to dress flawlessly when the natives around are disease-stricken and starving. (Marlow of course admires this man but to us this admiration seems to be ironical). Indeed, in this novel the brutal futility of the Belgian imperialist rule is memorably captured in image after image: a natural ravine is clogged with a wanton smash-up of imported drainage-pipes; and the grass grows through the ribs of a trader's corpse in a village abandoned in panic upon his accidental killing, colonialist and local community destroyed equally by their encounter.

The Wider Implications of This Novel: - We can go so far as to say that Conrad is here not only exposing the hollowness and the weaknesses of the Belgian imperialist rule over the Congo but also indirectly reminding us of British imperialism in various countries of the world of his time. Today the picture-of the world is widely different from what it was in Conrad's time. Today white imperialism has crumbled; and most of the countries of Asia and Africa have become independent. But in Conrad's time all the African countries were still a part of the dark continent, and most of the Asian Countries were being governed by their white rulers, chiefly the British. Therefore his picture of imperialist misrule and callousness in, the backward countries had in those days an undeniable relevance. Conrad's denunciation of imperialist rule in the Congo had a valuable message for both the exploiters and the exploited. Today, of course, this message has only a historical interest. Now all the subject-countries have become independent, though independence has brought new problems for them. The evil of imperialist rule has ended, but other evils have come into existence.

Heart of Darkness : Pessimism in the Novel

A pessimist generally ignores the bright side of life, and concentrates on the dark and depressing side. Conrad very rarely speaks about the joys of life and about man's victories and triumphs in this world. He is aware of the grandeur of human nature. But

he chiefly dwells upon the short-sightedness, corruption, egotism, and fanaticism which govern human life. The general trend of his thinking is pessimistic, and he feels especially troubled by the mystery of fate. Almost all his novels and stories lay stress onthe numberless varieties of human suffering. The weaknesses of human nature everywhere dominate his novels. Conrad is of the opinion that the fundamental selfishness of man turns him into a wolf. He is certainly aware of the virtues of loyalty, fidelity, and integrity which are found in human beings; but the emphasis in his novels is upon the misery and the misfortunes which afflict human life.

Heart of Darkness is a sombre and grim novel. The title of this book is Heart of Darkness, and the book deals with the dark continent. But the story itself is also essentially dark and bleak. There is very little in this book to relieve the darkness which prevails. After reading this novel, we rise from our seats with very heavy hearts; and for days together we find ourselves unable to recover from the sadness which had begun to oppress us.

Marlow's Opening Remarks: - Marlow's very opening remarks about the Roman conquest of Britain centuries ago have a touch of sadness about them. He tells his listeners that all conquest is "robbery with violence," and that violence in this context means "aggravated murder on a great scale." Powerful nations and communities strive to grab whatever they can get by attacking the weaker nations. Marlow is here undoubtedly hinting at the imperialist rule of the modem western nations also. In this context, we must remember that Marlow's voice is essentially the voice of Conrad himself. When Marlow criticizes and censures the ancient Roman conquest of the backward countries like Britain, it is Conrad who is censuring the Belgian, the Spanish, and the British conquerors who had established their own empires in modem times. These opening remarks by Marlow bring before us scenes of the reckless slaughter of the backward people and the establishment by the invaders of their own governments in the conquered territories.

The Sight of the Knitting-Women and the Talk of the Doctor: - Marlow's comments upon the two women who sit knitting black wool in the Company's office also have -a tinge of sadness in them. These knitting-women appear to Marlow to represent the Fates who keep busy spinning the yarn of the destiny of human beings on this earth. After seeing these women, Marlow speaks in terms of shrouds and dead bodies. They bring to his mind the spectacle of gladiators getting killed in the arena where bloody contests used to take place for the amusement of emperors and commoners. Thus the sight of these women is ominous and suggests dark thoughts. Even the Company's doctor, who examines Marlow and who is by nature a jovial man, says something which has a hint of tragedy in it. The doctor says that he, as a scientist, would very much like to study the changes that take place in the mind of a white man who goes into a dark and unexplored country like the Congo. Evidently, the doctor is aware of the fact that a white man would almost go crazy in a country where he meets only savages and has to deal with them. Subsequently we learn that no white man has been able to spend more than three years in the Congo. Everyone, who went there, fell ill and had to be sent back to Europe. The manager of the Central Station is, of course, a man with an exceptional

stamina; and he can withstand the rigours of the climate of theCongo; but most of the white men have been unable to do that.

The Sights of the Suffering and Misery of the Natives of the Congo: - Marlow's feeling of isolation is conveyed to us very effectively when he is sailing towards the Congo by a French steamer. In this context, Marlow tells us that he was a lonely man on that steamer because he had no point of contact with any member of the crew, and also because he had no duties to perform. The sights which Marlow witnesses on reaching the Company's very first trading post are of a kind which would depress and sadden any visitor. Marlow sees a number of black men held together by means of a chain, and each wearing an iron collar around his neck. This chain-gang of criminals gives rise to awful thoughts in Marlow's mind. The other sights, which Marlow sees here, make him feel that he has entered the gloomy circle of some inferno. He finds large numbers of black men sitting in groups, close to the tree-trunks, and dying slowly of starvation and disease. These sights are intended by Conrad to convey to us the white man's total indifference to the needs of the black natives of the Congo, and the white man's self-centeredness. The white man was supposed to ameliorate the conditions of life for the savages; but the white man is absolutely unconcerned with the indescribable sufferings and misery of these black men. The white man evidently makes full use of the labour and toil of the backward and ignorant natives but pays no attention to their uplift.

Depressing Portrayals of the White Men Working in the Congo:- Conrad also shows his pessimism in the manner in which Marlow portrays the white men whom he meets at the Central Station. The manager is described by Marlow as a man who could inspire neither love nor fear nor respect but who could certainly inspire "uneasiness." There was "nothing within him." In other words, the manager was a man with a barren soul. Conrad's purpose here is to convey to us the spiritual emptiness of the white men who went to the backward countries for purely trading purposes. The manager's chief anxiety is to collect as much ivory as possible, though at the same time he feels jealous of Mr. Kurtz who is achieving an enormous success in collecting ivory. The white agents, who are seen by Marlow loitering about the Central Station, seem to be idlers who have no work to do and who merely spend their time in talking ill of one another and in hatching intrigues. These men are described by Marlow satirically or ironically as "pilgrims". Then there is the brick-maker who earns Marlow's strong disapproval by his cunning. This man talks a lot, but there is little meaning in his talk. Marlow describes him as a **"papier-mâché Mephistopheles."** Naturally we feel greatly depressed by Marlow's sketches of these men who have come to the Congo as the ambassadors of progress and enlightenment but each of whom is cutting a sorry figure.

The Most Pessimistic Part of the Novel:- The most pessimistic part of the novel, however, is that which deals with the character and deeds of Mr. Kurtz. This man had at one time given evidence of possessing a highly progressive and liberal outlook. In the prime of his life, he had believed in the great benefits which the white men could confer upon the backward peoples of the earth. But, after having stayed among the savages, this man has himself become a savage. Instead of civilizing the beasts, he has himself become a beast. He certainly retains his identity as a civilized man, but he gives evidence of that identity only when he is spending some time at his headquarters at the

Inner Station. When he goes into the interior to collect ivory, he begins to participate in the life of the savages and to share all their activities. He has now become a powerful man and is worshipped by the savages as a kind of deity. He now presides over their midnight dances which always end with "unspeakable rites." He has now begun to gratify his various lusts without restraint, and he is now giving a free outlet to his monstrous passions. Marlow frankly says that Mr. Kurtz has now taken a high place among the devils of the land. Such is the effect of a savage environment on a civilized man when he is cut off from civilized society. Mr. Kurtz has now become a barbarian, giving a free vent to his primitive instincts which have risen to the surface under the influence of the savages. A large number of posts are fixed to the ground outside his residence are; and on the top of each post there is a human head or skull. These heads and skulls are of those natives who had incurred Mr. Kurtz's displeasure and who had been executed under his orders. In short, the spectacle of an enlightened man falling a prey to the evil influence of barbarism has an intensely depressing effect on us. We begin to feel that civilization is only a thin veneer which wears off soon under adverse conditions of life. Beneath his refinement and culture, a human being continues to be essentially a primitive. In fact, a change has begun to occur even in Marlow; and, if Marlow had stayed among the savages in the Congo for any length of time, he too would have morally degenerated and become a savage.

Heart of Darkness : Symbolism

Symbolism means a **deepermeaning** in **what has been written than meets the eye**.The complexity with profundity of most of the modern writers leads them to fill their wirings with greater significance than we find on the surface. "**Heart of Darkness" is repletewithsymbols**. Every person and everything means more than what we find on a superficial view. The novel is based on the facts of history as well as on the facts of Conrad's own life; but Conrad has tried to convey the evasive and elusive truth underlying both the historical facts and his personal experiences.

Almost every character in "Heart of Darkness" has some symbolic significance. The central figure **Mr. Kurtz,firstly**, symbolizes the **greed** and the **commercial** and **corrupt** mentality of the **westerncountries**. **Secondly**, he symbolizes the **white man's love for power**. Power corrupts man and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Thirdly, **the change**, which comes over him during his stay among the savages, symbolizes the **influence of barbarism** upon a civilized man. It also symbolizes the **irresistible influences of barbarism upon a civilized man cut off from civilized** society. Where there is no check on a man, the worst of him may come out.

Finally, Mr. Kurtz symbolizes the **repentantsinner**. Mr. Kurtz's desire to collect the maximum quantity of ivory conveys the exploitation of the backward people of Congo by the white colonizers.

Marlow too has a symbolic role in the novel. **Firstly**, he symbolizes the **spirit of adventure and a love of knowledg**e. **Secondly**, he **symbolizes the thoughtful**

observer of human life and the thoughtful student of human nature. He also **symbolizes** a philosophical approach to human life by constantly meditating upon what he observes. To some extent, he too **symbolizes** the **influence** of **savagery** because his own primitive instincts have been awakened when he heard a lot about Mr. Kurtz's way of life and then by his close personal contact with that man.

The subsidiary characters too possess symbolic significance. There is the **manager of the Central Station**. It is wrong to say that he symbolizes inefficiency. If he had been inefficient, he would not have been able to continue at his post. He **symbolizes spiritual emptiness.** If he is unable to inspire respect or love or fear, it is because he is spiritually barren and has no originality and no solid ideas in his head, though he can do his manager's work like a machine.

The **brick-maker** acts as a "**papier-mâché Mephistopheles" and symbolizes cunning and trickery.** There are numerous white agents or traders loitering around the Central Station because they are idle. These men are described by Marlow as "faithful pilgrims".

The **cannibal crew** on Marlow's steamer really symbolizes **efficiency** because they do not shirk work. More than efficiency, they symbolize **self**-**restraint** because they do not try to satisfy their hunger by killing and eating white men's flesh.

The **knitting women** in the beginning of the story **symbolize** the **Fates** who determine the future of every human being on the earth. These knitting women symbolize the danger which lies in store for Marlow.**In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly.**

The **majestic-looking native woman**, who appears on the riverbank when Mr. Kurtz is being taken away, symbolizes a **woman's strong devotion and steadfast loyalty** to her lord and lover.

Mr. **Kurtz'sfiancée** also symbolizes **loyalty** but her **loyalty is that of an innocent**, inexperienced woman who is deluded by false appearances and does not know the ways of the world. The fiancée symbolizes the hold of an illusion upon a woman's mind.

The **Russian** symbolizes **inquisitiveness or the desire to learn**. But he also **symbolizes loyalty and fidelity**, the two virtue which Marlow also symbolizes.

Many **sights seen by Marlow** also possess symbolic significance. The **French warshipfiring** aimlessly into the forest, and the rock being blasted with gun powder but without any purpose **symbolizethe sense of futility and an aimless endeavour**. **Ivory** symbolizes the white men's greed.

Then there is the sight of one over-worked and starved native labourers dying slowly of disease and starvation. The condition of these men symbolizes the sufferings of the natives who do not receive any sympathy from the white colonizers.**They were dying**

slowly … They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation.

The chain-gang with half a dozen native men chained to one another, and each wearing an iron collar round his neck, symbolize the white man's sway over the ignorant backward people without any concern for their welfare.**"… the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking.**

The description of the **natural scenery** also serves a symbolic purpose. The scenery is wild and awe-inspiring. The silence of the woods and the abundance of trees symbolizes**mystery and horror**. Marlow has given us many pictures of the thick, dense, matted forests.**And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake.**

The **city of Brussels symbolizes** the **inner corruption and degeneracy** of **whiteman'scivilization**. Brussels seems to Marlow to be the white sepulchre – something outwardly pleasant and holy but inwardly rotten.

Finally, Marlow's whole **journey into the Congo** has symbolic significance besides its literal meaning. It may be regarded as a **journey into subconscious** mind of Marlow in particular and of mankind in general. "**Heart of Darkness" is the story of a journey involving spiritual change in the voyager.** Symbolically, Marlow's journey into the Congo is an arduous physical activity or adventure. The literal meaning of 'heart of darkness' is the inmost region of Congo; but symbolically this phrase means the inmost region of man's mind or soul. As Marlow stands for Conrad, the novel becomes a kind of Conrad's exploration of his own mind during his visit to the Congo in 1890.**In the business of exploration, both exploiter and exploited are corrupted.**

In short, the imperial exploitation of the Congo has effectively been conveyed through a symbolic description of numerous scenes and situations.

The papier-mâché Mephistopheles is the name Marlow gives the brick-maker of the Central Station. He, at first glance, appears to be a kind soul, but it doesn't take long for Marlow to discover that he isn't: he is a "devil", more than an enabler or the grim-reaper, but less than Lucifer (who, I anticipate, is Mr. Kurtz himself). This is therefore the second level of the "Inferno". He is in papier-mâché because he is not real, though he could very well be: he is not really Mephistopheles, merely because he wants to be wants to be this type of character.

Heart of Darkness: Autobiographical Elements

Many of Conrad's works are based upon Conrad's own experiences in life. Heart of Darkness definitely, belongs to the category of autobiographical works. This novel is actually a record of Conrad's own experiences in the course of his visit to the Congo in 1890. Conrad was only nine years old when, looking at a map of Africa of the time, he said to himself.**"When I grow up, I shall go there."**

In Heart of Darkness the fictitious character, Charles Marlow, also tells his friends on the deck of a steamboat that, in his boyhood, he had been greatly attracted by the African country known as the Congo, and that the river Congo flowing through' that country had exercised a particular fascination upon him.

In 1890, **Conrad actually travelled to the Congo**. As a grown-up man, Conrad felt even more interested in going to the Congo because of the exploits of the explorer named Henry Morton Stanley. His exploration of the dark continent had led to the Belgian King Leopold II taking control of the region to which was given the name of the Congo Free State. As a result of Stanley's exploration, certain trading stations and administration centres were also established by Belgian Companies. Conrad's interest in Africa was greatly increased by Stanley's exciting experiences and discoveries. By the time Conrad reached the Congo, it had almost become the private property of King Leopold II and it had begun to be exploited by the Belgian trading companies in the name of Christianity and civilization.

Conrad's Unpleasant Experiences: - In order to go to the Congo, Conrad had to take the help of an aunt who was by vocationa writer of novels. Through her influence, Conrad obtained a job with a trading company as the captain of a steamboat which was to take an exploring expedition led by AlexandreDelcommune to a place called Katanga in the Congo. Conrad felt very pleased with the prospect of being able to visit the region of his boyhood dreams. However, Conrad's pleasure was greatly marred by a quarrel which he had with AlexandreDelcommune's brother who was functioning as a manager under the same trading company at a trading station on the way. Conrad formed a very adverse opinion about this manager whom he blamed for the many things which went wrong with his voyage on the river Congo, especially the delay in his arriving at his destination. Conrad had many other unpleasant experiences as well. Most of Conrad's experiences in the course of this visit were recorded by him in a diary to which he gave the name of theCongo Diary. One entry in this diary informs us that hardly sixty per cent of the Company's European employees stayed in the Congo for more than six months because of the diseases which overtook them. Hardly seven per cent of the Europeans could withstand the climate of the Congo for more than three years. Thus Conrad began to feel disillusioned with this region in the very early part of his visit. He felt also disappointed to find that most of the Europeans spoke ill of one another, and had very little else to do. In the course of his visit, Conrad had to walk over rocky territory in the scorching sun, camping at night in the damp and cold, and facing threats of mutiny from the porters. Finally, Conrad arrived at a station where the company's ships were assembled or repaired.

An Agent Called Klein, the Original of Mr. Kurtz: - Conrad's main duty now was to bring one of the Company's agents whose health had been failing. The name of this agent was Klein. This man had arrived in the Congo late in 1883 and had been placed in command of the Company's station at Stanley Falls in 1890. He subsequently died aboard Conrad's steamship by which he was being brought. It was this agent, by the name of Klein, who is transformed into Mr. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. During this time Conrad's own health began to be damaged by the unwholesome climate and environment. Hence he decided to give up his job and return to Europe. However, he

stayed on as long as he could; and, by the time he returned, he was a broken man. In fact, he never afterwards regained his normal health. And it was as a consequence of this permanent impairment of his health that he gave up voyaging altogether, and turned to writing as a profession.

"Heart of Darkness," Largely a Record of Conrad's Own Experiences: - In Heart of Darkness the character named Marlow is largely Conrad himself. AlexandreDelcommune's brother becomes the manager of the Central Station in Heart of Darkness. In the novel, Marlow makes very unfavourable comments on the manager of the Central Station because Conrad had formed an adverse view of AlexandreDelcommune's brother with whom Conrad had quarrelled. Similarly, in Heart of Darkness, Marlow says that the white men at the Central Station had very little work to do and spent much of their time plotting and intriguing against one another. Marlow, like Conrad, experiences a strong sense of disillusionment and disappointment after observing the behaviour of the white traders and also the conditions of life of the natives. The colonial exploitation of the dark continent by the white traders in ivory, as witnessed by Conrad himself, is described by Marlow in scathing terms. Marlow also records the disastrous effects of the climate of the Congo upon the white traders and agents who were sent by the Belgian Companies to this region. Only the manager of the Central Station has the stamina to withstand the rigours of climate here, while most other agents had to go back to Europe after spending a short period of time here (in theCongo). Furthermore, Marlow experiences the same sense of enlightenment and the same process of maturing through disillusion and defeat which Conrad himself underwent during his travels in the Congo. It has therefore to be recognized that Heart of Darkness is, to a large extent, an autobiographical book because, in most of the essentials, Marlow's experiences and feelings are very much the same as Conrad's own had been. There is a lot of resemblance between Conrad's Congo Diary and the contents of the novel Heart of Darkness to justify such an assumption. Conrad's experiences in the Congo have been described by a critic as exasperating, frustrating, and humiliating; and Marlow's experiences in his contact with most of the white men in the Congo are of the same kind. Marlow undergoes an extreme personal crisis; and this crisis is very much the same through which Conrad himself underwent in the Congo. Thus, both in externals and in terms of the inward mental life, Marlow meets the same fate which Conrad had met.

The Difference between Marlow and Conrad: - However, the autobiographical character of the novel should not be over-emphasized. There are certain substantial differences between Conrad's personal experiences and Marlow's experiences as described in the novel. Conrad's own experiences have served only as the raw material for the story of the novel. Marlow's development from idealism to disillusion and his greater understanding of life is very much the same as that of Conrad himself had been during his exploration of the Congo. But the differences are also noteworthy. Marlow is presented in the novel as being sceptical from the very beginning, as we see in his hesitation and his suspicion of the enterprise in Brussels, while for Conrad the opportunity to go to the Congo was the idealized reality of a boy's ambition. In other words, Marlow is doubtfully and apprehensive in the very beginning, while Conrad had been full of idealistic and romantic notions at the time of his departure for the Congo.

Marlow at the very outset feels that he is not going to the centre of a continent but to the centre of the earth itself. Conrad, on the other hand, had gone to the Congo with bright expectations.

The Difference between Mr. Klein and Mr. Kurtz: - But more important than this fact is Marlow's portrayal of the character of Mr. Kurtz, which does not correspond to anything that Conrad had actually witnessed and experienced. The character of the agent called Mr. Klein does not much resemble the character of Mr. Kurtz as portrayed in the novel. Conrad had not, in the course of his travels, met anybody who can be compared to Mr. Kurtz. Mr. Klein can be regarded only as a starting-point for the subsequent portrayal of Mr. Kurtz in the novel. During his personal travels through the Congo, Conrad had certainly gone to rescue the ailing Mr. Klein, but Conrad had not found in Mr. Klein that embodiment of evil which Marlow fords in Mr. Kurtz. Conrad in his diary does not dwell upon the character of Mr. Klein at such great length as Marlow does in the novel while speaking about Mr. Kurtz.

Marlow, the Mouthpiece of Conrad: - In conclusion, we may add that Marlow's outlook upon life or his philosophy of life is very much the same as Conrad's own was. Marlow appears as a pessimist in the novel; and Conrad himself was a pessimist too. Marlow recognizes the existence of certain virtues in human beings just as Conrad himself did. But, on the whole, Conrad had formed certain depressing ideas about life in general, and Marlow too expresses similar ideas about life. Marlow's reactions to most people, whom he meets in the course of his travels, are unfavourable and disappointing; and so were Conrad's own reactions to the people whom he met in the course of his voyage. Besides, we can read Conrad's own mind in Marlow's in such utterances as Marlow's declaring that he hates and detests a lie not because he is straighter than other people but simply because a lie appals him. Similarly we can read Conrad's own mind in such remarks as the following: **"We live, as we dream alone."** Marlow is more or less a lonely, isolated figure despite the presence before him of four of his associates to whom he tells his story; and Conrad himself was a lonely figure too.

Conrad's use of irony "Heart of Darkness"

Irony always arises from a contrast of some kind. The contrast may be between things, as they appear to be, and as they actually are. A man may say something and mean just the opposite. When that happens, we say that he has made an ironical remark. Then we may expect something to happen, but find that just the opposite has happened. In such a case there would be irony in what we had expected.Similarly, we may expect a man to behave in a particular way, and we may then find that he has behaved in just the opposite way. In such a case, there would be irony in our expectation of that man's behaviour. Irony is one of the most common, and one of the most effective, weapons in the hands of a writer. Conrad was an adept in the use of irony. Indeed, irony is as pervasive in his novels as it is in the novels of Jane Austen. His novels deal largely with life on the distant seas and with the unusual experiences of human beings. Much of Conrad's irony has a sombre or grim quality.

The greatest irony in Heart of Darkness is the **transformation** which takes place **in Mr. Kurtz** during his stay at the interior station of the Company. Mr. Kurtz had been a kind of intellectual during the years of his prime. He had once written a pamphlet stating his views about the role of the white man in the backward countries explored by him. In that pamphlet he had written that the whites necessarily appeared to the savages as supernatural beings and as deities. The whites could therefore exercise a great power over the savages and bring about a great betterment in their way of life. The whites, according to Mr. Kurtz, could confer great benefits upon the backward people of the countries which they visited, which they conquered, and which they governed. The whites could suppress the savage customs of those backward people, and could civilize those people. Thus **Mr. Kurtz held highly progressive views about the role of the white men in the dark and unexplored countries of Africa**. And yet Mr. Kurtz had written at the end of that pamphlet the following words: **"Exterminate all the brutes."** This bit of writing at the end seemed to contradict what he had written about the constructive role of the white people.

Mr. Kurtz was expected to strive to bring about all possible improvements in the way of life and in the way of thinking of the savages of the Congo where Mr. Kurtz had settled down to carry out his duties as an agent of a Belgian trading company. However, just the reverse happens. Mr. Kurtz, **instead of civilizing the savages**, himself **becomes a sava**ge. This is one of the most **surprising developments in this novel**. Thus the opposite of what was expected from Mr. Kurtz has happened. This is the chief irony in the story of this novel.

Another great irony in this novel is the **attitude which Marlow ultimately adopts towards Mr. Kurtz**. Marlow's impressions about Mr. Kurtz are of a very adverse kind in the beginning. From the various reports that he has heard about Mr. Kurtz, he forms a most unfavourable opinion about Mr. Kurtz's character. And yet, afterwards, Marlow becomes an admirer of Mr. Kurtz, and begins to harbour strong feelings of friendship and respect towards that man. We had expected that a rational and intelligent man like Marlow would continue to react to Mr. Kurtz in the same adverse manner. But what happens is just the opposite of what we had expected. Knowing fully the evil which has begun to dwell, in Mr. Kurtz, Marlow yet begins to cherish feelings of regard and esteem for that man. Evidently, Marlow's own primitive instincts, have also been aroused, and been brought to the surface. That is why Marlow has begun to perceive a kind of kinship between himself and Mr. Kurtz. Thus, another civilized man, one who is an embodiment of reason and sanity, has also fallen a near-prey to the influences of savagery and primitivism.

There is **irony** also **in the attitude of Mr. Kurtz's fiancée towards Mr. Kurtz**. She has been entertaining feelings of the highest admiration and esteem for him. She has beenfeeling proud of the man who had proposed marriage to her, and whom she had agreed to marry in opposition to the wishes of her own family. After hearing about the death of her lover, this woman is plunged into grief and, when Marlow goes to meet her a year after Mr. Kurtz's death, he finds her still in mourning. She talks about her deceased lover in glowing terms and pays to him the highest tribute which a woman can pay to her lover. **The irony in this case lies in the fact that the man, whom this**

woman still worships and adores, had become a devil as a result of his stay among the savages. The irony becomes all the greater when Marlow tells her that the last word uttered by her lover before his death was her own name. She feels overjoyed to hear that Mr. Kurtz had spoken her name while dying though the actual fact is that the last words spoken by him had been: "The horror!" The irony in this case arises from the contrast between what Mr. Kurtz had actually become and what his fiancée still continues to think about him.

There is a similar **irony** in the **Russian's attitude of worship towards Mr. Kurtz**. Mr. Kurtz has become a devil, as Marlow tells us. But, to the Russian, Mr. Kurtz has been a kind of hero worthy of adoration. The Russian tells Marlow, that Mr. Kurtz had enlarged his mind and that Mr. Kurtz had taught him to perceive the very essence of things. In other words, Mr. Kurtz had appeared to be a great sage and moralist to the Russian. The Russian had found in Mr. Kurtz a hidden wisdom which was a source of great enlightenment and illumination to the Russian. It is very strange that a man, who has become a savage and a beast, should be able to inspire such a deep respect in the Russian who is by no means a fool or a simpleton.

There is **irony** also in **Marlow's descriptions of things at certain points in his narration**. For instance, his description of the blasting of a rock with gunpowder, when the rock does not stand in the way of the building of the railway line, is surely ironical. Ironical also is his description of the warship firing its guns without any purpose. The supposed purpose of the firing of these guns is to destroy the enemy, but no enemy is visible anywhere in the forest; and the warship is merely wasting its ammunition. There is irony also in the fact that, although the white man has brought a lot of machinery into the dark country of the Congo, the machinery is lying unused. Equally ironical is the fact that, although there are heaps and heaps of rivets lying at one of the Company's stations, no rivet are made available to Marlow for the repairing of the wrecked steamer which he has been able to pull out of the river-bed.

Irony in Some of Marlow's Portrayals of the White Persons

There is **irony** also in the way in which Marlow **describes** some of the **whitepersons**. His description of the two **knitting-women**, in the Company's office in Brussels is **ironical**. There is a tinge of irony in his description of the **Company'sdoctor** and the manner in which he examines the prospective employees of the Company. There is a lot of irony in **Marlow'sdescription** of the **whiteagents** who are seen loitering about at the Central Station in the Congo, and in Marlow's describing these men as faithless pilgrims. The irony here becomes most pungent. For instance, referring to the sticks which these men carried, Marlow says: "**I verily believe they took these sticks to bed with them".** Besides, the irony here is not sombre or tragic but most comic and most amusing. Then there is irony in his portrayal of the manager's uncle, and the brick-maker who tries to extricate some information from Marlow because in his view, Marlow is a highly connected man wielding a lot of influence among the higher officials of the Company.

To conclude, irony deepens a particular effect. In this novel, the use of irony deepens the effect of melancholy and sadness which constitute the prevailing atmosphere of the story. Irony sharpens the sorrow which we, experience when we read about the unexpected transformation which comes, over Mr. Kurtz. The ignorance of Mr. Kurtz's fiancée about this transformation in him saddens us because, being innocent and idealistic, she still visualizes him as her noble knight and her adorable hero. Similarly we feel a deep regret at the moral deterioration which unexpectedly takes place in Marlow and which him admire Mr. Kurtz.

Heart of Darkness : Marlow's Symbolic Character

Marlow is one of the two narrators in "Heart of Darkness" and he is the more important of the two. Conrad has created a complex narrator in Marlow, a man who is not all good or all bad. Marlow narrates the story constituting the real substance of the novel. A mere narrator would objectively tell a story, keeping himself out of it. But in "Heart of Darkness", Marlow himself is one of the central characters. As a narrator, Marlow is unreliable that he is not an objective teller of the story, but is instead emotionally conflicted about the events and people within his tale. He is also a figure who is alienated from the mainstream. He is also an observer, a thinker, and a commentator. Half of the interest and appeal of this novel would be lost if we were to ignore the role of Marlow in "Heart of Darkness". Marlow also has a symbolic role. He stands for something bigger and larger than himself.

Marlow symbolizes the spirit of adventure and the love of exploration. The spirit of adventure is ineradicable and inborn but only some people possess it. The man seeks adventure to acquire knowledge. Marlow showed his spirit of adventure in his very boyhood when world-maps aroused his curiosity. He felt attracted by the African country, Congo, and fascinated by a river Congo. On growing up, he became a sailor, sailed upon many seas, and got an opportunity to explore the Congo and sail upon the river Congo. He does not go to there for trading purposes. It is to satisfy his spirit of adventure, and his boyhood longing, that he goes into the heart of darkness.

Marlow serves also as a symbol of the thoughtful observer of human life and the thoughtful student of human nature. Marlow symbolizes the class of curious people. He tries to probe the mind of everybody whom he encounters in the course of his travels. Firstly, Marlow observes the white men who have come to the Congo for trading purposes. He observes the chief accountant of the trading Company and feels much impressed by him who has kept up appearances even in a sordid environment and whose account-books are in apple-pie order. Marlow then observes the manager who is obeyed by his subordinates, but who can inspire neither respect, nor love, nor fear. To Marlow, he seems to be hollow. Next, Marlow observes the brick-maker and concludes that he is a papier-mâché Mephistopheles. The group of white traders, idling about, creates upon Marlow the impression that they are "faithless pilgrims". Marlow clearly brings out the failings and the meanness of the white men. There is nothing admirable about what Marlow sees of their life in Congo.

Marlow observes the natives with same keenness and minuteness. He depicts the misery and the suffering of the poor, wretched and over-worked natives. He finds many of these starving to death slowly.

'They were dying slowly … They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom.

He also sees a group of muscular natives paddling their boat in a carefree manner, enjoying their work. Then Marlow observes the self-restraint of his cannibal crew who are feeling very hungry but do not kill the white men to eat their flesh. Marlow also admits the hard-working helmsman on his steamship, but greatly laments the lack of caution on the part of that helmsman, leading to his death.

Marlow also gives us vivid pictures of the wild scenery on both banks of the river Congo, and he conveys to us fully the darkness of the jungle and its impenetrable thickness of trees, in addition to the dangers which lurk there.

Marlow as a keen observer, thinker and a commentator, appears even more in his study of the character of Mr. Kurtz. Marlow here appears as a philosopher-cum-psychologist by giving us a detailed portrayal of Mr. Kurtz. He conveys to us the evil which had taken control of Mr. Kurtz's mind and his actions. He tells us about the influence of barbarism of the natives that had begun to exercise upon Mr. Kurtz. He had begun to participate fully in the "unspeakable rites" and ceremonies of the savages and their mode of life. He had begun to gratify all his lusts, monstrous passions and had begun to experience all kinds of abominable satisfaction. Marlow also conveys Mr. Kurtz's inextinguishable gift of eloquence in speech and his irresistible influence upon those who encounter him. Here we must note that Marlow himself also falls to some extent, a prey to the evil in Mr. Kurtz. He also begins to experience the surge of primitive instincts in his own mind. Of course, much remains mysterious about Mr. Kurtz despite Marlow's insight and Marlow's vast knowledge of human nature; but the salient features of Mr. Kurtz have effectively and vividly been brought to our notice by Marlow who therefore becomes a symbol of the writer having a penetrating mind and a masterly way of writing.

Marlow also symbolizes self-exploration. Marlow's journey into the Congo symbolizes a journey by Marlow into his own sun-conscious mind, and even into the sub-conscious mind of mankind in general. "Heart of Darkness" is not only a physical journey into an unexplored dark continent, but also a psychological and mystical journey. The Inner Station, where Mr. Kurtz lives, symbolizes the sub-conscious mind of man, and particularly of Marlow himself. On several occasions, Marlow reveals the working of his own mind to us in clear terms. Marlow shows a lot of bluntness when talking about himself and about the thoughts which cross his mind. He tells us freely about his hatred of lies, his assent in the brick-maker's mistaken idea about him, his motive in telling a lie to Mr. Kurtz's fiancée at the end of the story. At least the lies have a pure motive, for they save the distraught fiancé. Just as he tells us frankly about the nightmare being the evil embodied by Mr. Kurtz, similarly he tells us of the inner strength which enabled him

to withstand the dangers of his travel in the Congo, and he speaks of the dream-like quality of some of his experiences.

Unlike most Europeans who bought into the justifications for imperialism and saw it as a righteous cause, Marlow saw that it was nothing but greed. However, Marlow's ability to distance himself from the dominant thinking of the time does not fully free him from that kind of thinking. In the end, he accepts the injustice of imperialism by supporting the lies, which justify it.

Significance of lie in Heart of Darkness

The closing scene of The Heart of Darkness , Marlow's interview with the dead man's white Intended (a pale figure of delusion juxtaposed against the black Athena who had usurped her place for Kurtz at the Inner Station), leaves the reader with ambivalent feelings about Conrad's chief narrator. The paradoxical ending of Heart of Darkness has caused considerable critical consternation, if not outrage. That the novel should end with a lie should be told to a beloved amazing, that the lie should be told in a novel ostensibly directed towards a bewaring of the nefarious nature of the human heart almost astounding; that such a lie should be practiced by modern Buddha absolutely preposterous. The ending has therefore been criticized as being 'a botched scene', 'a fatal blunder' and even as 'the final flaw in a flawed novel'. Yet a contextual reading of the novel would almost lead a discerning reader to a radically different conclusion. The conclusion would be that even though the ending does not satisfy the human desire for the whole truth or for a satisfying rounded final, the ending is not only appropriate, but also something devoutly to be wished for.

Every aspect of the ending is stepped in grandeur, pervaded with touch of the ethereal. The setting suggests magnificence and splendid idealism: the drawing room is 'lofty', the windows are long and luminous, the tall marble fireplace has monumental whiteness , the piano is grand and stands massively looking like a sombre and polished sarcophagus and the door is high. The lady is described in an almost equally idealized and hollowed manner:

"She has a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering… this hair, this pale visage this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident and trustful."

She was dressed in black although it was almost a year since Kurtz's death, and this unceasing mourning is revelatory of the fact that she was 'girlish', that 'she was one of those creature who were not the play thing of time'. Her attitude towards Kurtz, her reverence for him is flawless. Illumined by the inextinguishable light of love and belief, she declares, 'it was impossible to know him and not to admire him.'

The grandeur of the scene is shattered when Marlow lies to her. Marlow's lie gives a lie to the carefully crafted and meticulously woven façade of glory. The answers to Marlow's motivation are to be discovered in the nature of the lie itself and in the nature of the liar.

Lies, of course, have proven indispensable to fabulists ever since Cain lied to God in Genesis and Odysseus slipped out of one disguise into another in The Odyssey. But Marlow's lie is neither as wicked as Cain's (especially since it acknowledges his need to be the keeper of his spiritual brother's memory) nor as self-serving but justifiable as Odysseus's. When the beloved declares that she would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance of the dying Kurtz, and laments that there may not have been anyone to hear his last words, Marlow unwittingly states that he had heart ‛ his very last words’. When pressed to reveal the final words of Kurtz , the self reviling and desperate Marlow can only utter a lie:’ the last word he pronounced was your name” the final victorious truth expressed in articulo mortis by Kurtz---‛ The horror! The horror!’- is thereby suppressed.

The questions remain as to why Marlow tells an untruth. Such a lie may be explicable in the case of an inveterate liar, but not in the case of Marlow since it made it abundantly clear that lies are abhorrent to him. When he speaks about lying early in the novel, he says ,’lying appals me,’ it is exactly what I hate and detest in the world,’ it makes me miserable’ and sick like biting into something rotten wound’. As Garrett Stewart points out in lying as dying in Heart of Darkness ‛, ‛his strict ethical theorem, the equation of death with lying ,is even in the early context no stray remark, for it threads untruth to death in the casual nexus of the European experience in Africa.’ All through the novel his one endeavour has been to know the truth about himself, and it is inconceivable that a man so meticulous about knowing the truth should lie to others.

The answer might be one of the various proffered—that he was being merciful to the Intended whom he admired , that he was generally mild and protective towards women as they were cocooned from reality, and that he wanted the truth only for himself. That Marlow may be tempted to hide the hideous truth fro the lady whom he found to be a veritable paragon of virtue, one who was about to dedicate her entire life to Kurtz, is quite likely. That he does so because he desires to shield all women from the unbearable truth of the darkness of the human heart too is plausible in view of his earlier remark about woman, ‛it is queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own…’ Marlow would be the last to shatter the fragile edifice of their make- believe world. If Marlow’s assertion seems to deny women the right or need for the quest for the truth, one might go further and suggest that Marlow’s was a journey of self-discovery and that therefore he was never interested in telling her truth.

Even though the reasons preferred may contain some truths, perhaps the greatest truth behind the lie is something different. It is not merely designed to provide relief to a particular woman or even to all women and certainly his purpose could never have been the selfish one of attaining the truth only for himself. Much more likely is his realization that not only cans mankind ‛not bear too much reality’, but also the mankind must be saved from the reality. Society can exist only if there is some idealistic basis, even if it is an allusion. It is only save mankind from devastating truth about itself, that Marlow makes the supreme sacrifice of telling a lie, something foreign to his nature, alien to his spirit.

Conrad’s Use of Journey Motif in Heart of Darkness

The novella Heart of Darkness was written in 1899 by Joseph Conrad explores the idea of self-discovery and can be described as a story of initiation. Marlow, the protagonist of the novella, undertakes a boat ride up the Congo River in search of Kurtz, the chief of the Inner Station, however this journey, which can be seen as a journey into the self, one’s ‘inner spirit’. Conrad uses the journey both in its literal and figurative meanings. Most obvious is Marlow’s journey to discover Africa, and the effects of imperialism. On a deeper level, it seems as if Conrad uses the journey to cloak Marlow’s true journey into himself. Through the use of the physical journey in Heart of Darkness, the reader can see the inner journey that the characters in the novella undertake and the effects that their unconscious has on their thoughts and actions. Marlow’s journey from Europe, to the Outer Station and then to the Central Station also tests his ability to distinguish between good and evil since he witnesses such proceedings that draw out a moral judgment from him.

The journey in Heart of Darkness passes not only through the capricious waters that spanning the physical world, but also the paradoxical ocean which exists in the heart of man and all of mankind. Through Marlow's somewhat fanatical eyes we view the enigma that is humanity, and the blurred line between light and dark. It is a voyage into the deepest recesses of the human heart and mind (a voyage of self-discovery or, like Albert Guerard it can also be viewed as a ‘night journey’), leading to epiphany, enlightenment, and finally spiralling downwards into the crevices of a hell existing within each and every one of us, which is represented by the character of Kurtz. Although through Marlow Conrad depicts a journey into the Congo, his use of symbolism and wordplay divulge that it is something much more profound.

Almost every action, object, and character in Conrad's Heart of Darkness has a deeper, more relevant meaning behind it, serving to bring us ever closer to the conclusion that the voyage is indeed an inward one. The first major indication of this is the posture of Marlow as he recounts his journey into the Congo. According to the narrator, "he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower." This lotus position is one typically used for meditation, which is in fact defined as a spiritual journey promoted by a lucidity of thought. Successful meditation leads to a more discerning understanding of human nature and allows one to contemplate the innermost workings of the mind. Therefore Marlow's stance capitalizes on his true destination, insinuating from the very first pages that his journey is actually within himself.

From the start of Marlow's tale there are countless of symbols relating to the unchartered places of the subconscious, and the journey intended to discover them. For instance, Marlow is lead to a room by two silent women spinning black wool (The women represent the Fates of Greek mythology, who spin a skein of wool which symbolizes a person's life. The fact that these women's thread is black creates an ominous sense of foreboding.). There his attention is drawn to a map and he finds himself enthralled by a large river coursing through the heart of Africa.He notices that the river resembled a snake, and that it was "fascinating." For some odd reason, this long, sinuous river

tempted him, despite its reptilian connotations, which already alerts the reader to danger ahead. The river is akin to the serpent in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, offering the unwitting pair a forbidden fruit - wisdom, and a dark knowledge of oneself. Also, throughout the journey, there are repeated references to both life and death.

Uncannily, these two are always intertwined. For example, there is a theme of bones which is constantly recurring in Marlow's story. The Swede mentions a man who died, and whose skeleton was left sprawled on the ground until the grasses began to grow up through his ribcage. The grass represents life, and of course, the skeleton represents death. These two are woven together. Also, there is Kurtz's obsession with ivory (dental bone), and according to Marlow he has the appearance of the object of his fixation. From Marlow's description, Kurtz bears a skeletal resemblance even when he is alive. Conrad's frequent symbolic combination of life and death is probably one of his numerous parallels to light and dark, echoing the fact that the two must exist simultaneously - there cannot be without the other. Conrad's book is based on the presence of light and dark within everyone, and in Marlow's journey the question is often posed of which is predominant. There are times when darkness usurps the light, others when it is the opposite. However, the darkness (evil) usually tends to prevail.

Conrad is implying that a sense of evil resides in the core of every human, and therefore reigns at the centre of humanity, however veiled by morals, civilization and refinement. This is one of the main facts Marlow ascertains on his journey, for he sees darkness everywhere, even when there is light. Just as the line between light and dark is indistinct, the barrier segregating civilization from savagery is equally obscure. In Africa, Marlow repeatedly encounters natives, and his crew is comprised of twenty cannibals. As they progress deeper into the heart of the forest, we can take note that black people are dehumanized. They are perpetually referred to in animalistic terms, and are treated as such. However, it is these "savages" who survive and thrive in the heart of darkness, and whose ways eventually engulf Kurtz. There is also the indication here that technology, civilization, and refinement have been rendered useless.

Every character thought to be at the pinnacle of cultivation and etiquette either dies or becomes corrupted by his surroundings (Kurtz, Fresleven). It is apparent that civilization is utterly futile in such surroundings. Kurtz serves as a prime example of a civilized gentleman who capitulates to his barbaric side due to his environment. Regardless of the respect and admiration showered upon him by his peers, not to mention the jealousy, he was at heart a hollow man, consumed by his greed for ivory. This is probably why he gave in so readily to his primitive instincts, partaking in the horrendous rituals of the natives, and letting his dark essence become the hub of his actions.

Kurtz is also symbolic of the evil within our society, for people saw him as the "emissary of science and progress." He represents the person found deep within the recesses of our subconscious, the core of darkness ever-present beneath the gauzy layers of refinement and civility. "One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' In this quote we can see that, symbolically, Kurtz is so overcome by darkness that he is blind to light. This is also embodied in an oil painting done by Kurtz, depicting a blind folded woman surrounded by

darkness but carrying a torch which casts a sinister light over her face. The blindfolded woman can be taken as a common Western symbol of justice and liberty, things that man has created to differentiate himself from the beasts and savages. The fact that the woman is enshrouded in darkness with only insufficient torchlight to guide her says a lot about the nature of our society.

The culmination of Marlow's journey leads into the heart of darkness, or in a more worldly sense, Hell. Heart of Darkness fosters the allusion that hell is within us that it is the evil existing deep inside our souls. Marlow visits this place when he finally encounters Kurtz, and his innocent morals are challenged. He views first-hand the inhumanity man is capable of, and the journey begins to take on all the properties of a nightmare. When Kurtz himself is lying on his deathbed, he sees into his own heart, looks his personal hell in full view, and utters things which give Marlow a grim revelation as to what lies within that black abyss. Kurtz's final words, as he ends his voyage into his bitter core, are "The horror, the horror!" referring to what he sees inside himself.

The journey Marlow undertakes is seemingly in our own world, something which we reside in yet know so little about. We delude ourselves into believing that we can tame and subdue it, and that it will readily succumb and be molded to our good intentions. However, just as trying to harness the dark and primal nature within ourselves is impossible, this is an equally unattainable fantasy. Conrad's world is an embodiment of humanity, its ocean is its heart, and its impenetrable forest is its mind. Through Marlow's epiphany it is revealed that at the mouth of every river, at the core of every grove, subsists a perpetual darkness encased in light.

Thus what makes Heart of Darkness more than an interesting travelogue and shocking account of horrors is the way that it details — in subtle ways — Marlow's gradual understanding of what is happening in this far-off region of the world. Like many Europeans — including his creator — Marlow longed for adventure and devoured accounts such as those offered by Stanley. But once he arrives in the Congo and sees the terrible "work" (as he ironically calls it) taking place, he can no longer hide under the cover of his comfortable civilization. Instead, all the horrors perpetrated by European traders and agents — typified by Kurtz — force him to look into his own soul and find what darkness lies there. In the first half of the novel, Marlow states, "The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach" — but by the end of his journey, he will have peeked beneath "the surface" and discovered the inhumanity of which even men such as the once-upstanding Kurtz are capable.

Marlow's descent into his mind in "Heart of Darkness"

Heart of Darkness is a novel which clearly shows the influence of psychology and psychiatry (psychoanalysis) which were emerging as full-fledged sciences at the time when this novel was written. Heart of Darkness is a record of the inner life of Marlow during the period of his travels in that country.

Heart of Darkness certainly gives us a vivid description of the thoughts and ideas which crossed his mind during his stay in that country. Marlow appears in this novel as a thinker who broods and meditates upon everything that he sees. Marlow appears as a keen observer, and he also appears as a thinker who reflects upon everything that he observes. Marlow is an introspective man who keeps constantly examining his own thoughts as they arise in his mind. Thus the book is to be treated as a kind of an exploration by Marlow of his own mind, of both his conscious mind and his sub-conscious mind. The phrase **"heart of darkness"** also means the inmost depths of the human mind which requires a great subtlety to plumb and probe.

From the very beginning, this novel gives us the **internals as well as the externals**. The externals are the outward scenes, happenings, incidents, and the persons with whom Marlow comes into contact, while the internals are the workings of Marlow's own mind or the thoughts which take their rise in his sub-conscious. Thus the novel is a record of a two-fold journey–a journey into the Congo which had at that time not yet been fully explored, and a journey into the dark realm of Marlow's mind and, in a sense, into the dark realm of the human mind in general. He narrates his experiences to a small group of his friends, he not only gives them his experiences of outward happenings but also his inward reactions to his experiences. For instance, he tells his friends that the city of Brussels made him think of a **"whited sepulchre"** (that is, a place which outwardly seems to be pleasant and righteous but is actually corrupt and disgusting). When he speaks about his encounter with the two knitting-women, he also describes his mental reaction to them: "**Hail, old knitter of black wool. Those who are about to die salute you!"** After seeing the knitting-women and after meeting his aunt, Marlow feels as if, instead of going to the centre of a continent, he were about to start for the centre of the earth. Similarly, he describes his reactions to the doctor who examines him and who measures the dimensions of his skull because it is in the interests of science for him to do so. The doctor at this time tells Marlow that it would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals during their stay in the dark continent.

When Marlow is **sailing towards the Congo** on a French steamer, he again **records his thoughts**. He tells us that during this journey the voice of the surf was now and then a positive pleasure to him like the speech of a brother. This voice, he says, was something natural which had its reason and which had a meaning. Marlow sees half a dozen black men linked together with a chain, and each wearing an iron collar around his neck. These men were criminals who had violated the law. This sight produces a deep effect on Marlow, giving rise to a chain of awful thoughts in his mind. He here says that he had previously seen the devil of violence, the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire, but that these half a dozen black men were strong, muscular, red-eyed devils.

Marlow's **encounterwith the manager** of the Central Station and the brick-maker there also **gives rise to manythoughts in his mind**. The manager seems to be a man with nothing inside him, while the brick-maker appears to be a cunning and inquisitive man who tries to find out, by questioning Marlow, whether Marlow has any influence among the higher officials of the trading company which has sent him here. In this context, Marlow tells us that he has always hated and detested lies, not because he is straighter than the other people, but because a lie simply appals him. Marlow finds a

taint of death and a flavour of mortality in lies. However, on this occasion, Marlow allows the brick-maker falsely to assume that he did have a lot of influence among the high officials of the company. In the same context, Marlow says that the figure of Mr. Kurtz at this time was like a dream to him. He further says that no man can convey to others a dream-sensation, and that it is impossible for a man to convey to others the life-sensation of any given period of his existence. Marlow then adds: **"We live, as we dream alone."** Thus here we find Marlow probing his own mind and delving into depths of his mind.

Later, **Marlow speaks about hiswork-ethic**. He has to work hard on the ship which he has to command. In pulling the wrecked steamer out of the river and repairing it, Marlow has to work very hard. His hard work made him fall in love with the steamer. Marlow says that work gives a man the chance to find himself and his own reality.

When Marlow has actually become the skipper of the Company's steamer and begins his voyage on the river Congo, he **continues tomeditate upon whatever he sees and overhears**. For instance, at the very outset he says that, in performing the daily duties of a routine kind, a man comes to know only the surface reality of life because the inner truth is hidden from him. In command of a steamer on a strange and unknown river, Marlow feels like a blind-folded man driving a motor-van over a bad road. Then Marlow describes his reactions to the scenery which he witnesses. "**We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness,"** he says; and the earth at that time seemed unearthly to him. A little later, he says that the **mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in its all the past as well as all the future.** Furthermore, a real man is he who can meet the naked truth with his own true stuff.

Marlow discovers a book on the **subject of seamanship in the deserted hut**. Such a book being found in that hut was something wonderful, says Marlow; but still more surprising were the notes written in pencil in the margin. The notes seemed to be in cipher and looked like an extravagant mystery. Later, however, the mystery is solved because Marlow learns that the notes were written not in cipher but in the Russian language. Here Marlow also observes that **no man in this world is safe from trouble at any stage in his life**.

Marlow's **reflections upon his cannibal crew** are also noteworthy. Here again he records his mental reactions to an outward situation. The crew consists of cannibals who would like to eat human flesh to satisfy their hunger. They could easily kill the white men on board the steamer and eat their flesh; but they did not do so. Marlow feels amazed to find that, in spite of their gnawing hunger, they did not kill the white men on board. It is really easier to face the death of a close relative than to face prolonged hunger. It is easier to endure dishonour and even the damnation of one's soul than to bear the pangs of hunger. Marlow is therefore filled with **admiration for the self-restraint of those cannibals** in not killing the white men and eating their flesh to appease their hunger.

Then there are **Marlow's reflections upon the helmsman**, who gets killed by one of the natives through his own folly. The look in the dead helmsman's eyes haunts Marlow.

In this context Marlow says that the helmsman had been lacking in self-restraint. There are also **Marlow's reflections upon Mr. Kurtz** about whom he has been hearing a lot. Mr. Kurtz was a gifted creature, with eloquence as his greatest gift. When Marlow is told by someone that Mr. Kurtz might be dead by this time, Marlow feels deeply disappointed. He does not, of course, shed tears, but he is certainly grieved at the idea of having lost the privilege of meeting Mr. Kurtz and listening to his eloquent talk.

From this point onwards the **narration centres round the deeds and the personality** of Mr. Kurtz; and, in telling us the facts about Mr. Kurtz, Marlow also gives us his own reactions to those facts. The facts about Mr. Kurtz are certainly very intriguing, but so are **Marlow's reactions to those facts**. Mr. Kurtz has now become an embodiment of evil, so that it seems to Marlow that Mr. Kurtz has taken a high seat among the devils of the land. And here Marlow once again talks about the need of inner strength in a man if a man has to face such grim facts as the devilry of Mr. Kurtz. Furthermore, Marlow now speaks about the spell which Mr. Kurtz's reputation has begun to cast upon his own mind. Marlow here says that subsequently he became a devoted friend of Mr. Kurtz, and that Mr. Kurtz was able to conquer his soul. After meeting that man, Marlow begins really to admire him despite the man's demonic character.

In fact, Marlow now becomes deeply devoted to Mr. Kurtz and goes to the extent of saying that he would never betray him and that it had already been ordained that he would always remain loyal to him. Marlow admits that Mr. Kurtz was a nightmare but he still maintains that he would never betray him because; Mr. Kurtz was "the nightmare of his choice". Thus Marlow has developed a keen personal interest in that man, whose evil he also recognizes fully. Even after returning to Europe, Marlow remains loyal to Mr. Kurtz's memory because, when Mr. Kurtz's fiancée asks him what Mr. Kurtzs' last word before death had been, Marlow tells her a lie and says that Mr. Kurtz's last word had been her own name. Now this loyalty to Mr. Kurtz again means only one thing. Marlow has been able to convey to us indirectly and subtly the influence of Mr. Kurtz's primitivism upon himself, without being able to define that influence in specific and explicit terms. It is in the last one-third of the novel that Marlow tries to lay bare his sub-conscious mind. The writing in this part of the novel anticipates the technique which came afterwards to be known as "stream of consciousness" technique. This technique was subsequently practised by writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Conrad was a forerunner of that technique whereby the inner consciousness of a character is revealed. The inspiration and the incentive to explore the sub-conscious mind had come, of course, from the findings of Sigmund Freud.

Colonization and Greed in Heart of Darkness

The book Heart of Darkness written by Joseph Conrad is a masterpiece in literature. Conrad obtained many of his perspectives for his work from `hands on experience' and also from his harsh background and childhood. When Conrad was still a child his father was exiled to Siberia because of suspicions on plotting against the Russian government. After his mother died, Conrad's father sent him to his mother's brother in Krakow for education purposes. This was the last time Conrad ever saw his father.

In 1890 Conrad took command of a steamship in the Belgian Congo. Conrad's experiences in the Congo paved the way and the outline for his brilliant novel Heart of Darkness. During his time in the Congo, Conrad's health took a devastating blow so he returned to England to recover. Returning to sea twice before finishing Almayer's Folly in 1894 Conrad wrote several other books including one about Marlow which was called Youth (a narrative before beginning Heart of Darkness in 1898). Conrad wrote most of his other major works Lord Jim (which features Marlow), Nostramo and The Secret Agent as well as several collaborations with Ford Madox during the following two decades. Conrad died in 1924 but will always have and hold a place in the hearts of many readers. In his book Heart of Darkness Conrad gives the us an understanding of how the Africans were mistreated during colonization. The book also pinpoints many cases that show the greed and selfishness of imperialism.

The evilness of how the Africans were treated is critiqued well in a quote **"the men who work for the company describe what they do as `trade' and their treatment of native Africans is part of a benevolent project of civilization".** This is a very true statement which shows that the way the colonizers treated the African was more like slaves rather than people. The book Heart of Darkness describes this inhuman behaviour in the quote **"Each chief was authorized to collect taxes; he did so by demanding that individuals should work for a specific period of time for a minimum payment. This, of course, was another name for slavery. The so-called taxpayers were treated like prisoners; their work was carried out under the supervision of armed sentries, and, as can be easily imagined, the system lent itself to all kinds of tyranny, brutality and subsequent reprisals by the natives. In one concession alone one hundred and forty-two Africans were killed. The spirit of bitterness and hatred generated in the people was quite terrifying, but little could be done about it as thee was not enough control in the area to prevent the various agents from misusing their power".**

This quote sums up the immorality and the misuse of power against the Africans. It also gives insight into the horror of the colonization that was taking place at the time. One critic (Wilson Harris) helps describe Conrad's view and vision of the way that the Africans were treated. Harris writes "He sees the distortions of imagery and, therefore, of character in the novel as witnessing to the horrendous prejudice on Conrad's part in his vision of Africa and the Africans". This quote helps explain why Conrad describes the Africans the way he did (which some people may consider racist), but in actual fact it was just the reality of the situation.

The evilness of imperialism is shown very well in this quote **" As Marlow travels from the outer station to the central station and finally up the river to the inner station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty and near slavery".** This shows that the colonizers would do whatever it took including taking over the people and using them as `near slaves' for their own personal benefits. The results of this madness and greed can be best shown through Conrad's use of life and imagery. The land of Africa is described throughout the book as a living thing, and the Congo is brought to life as a snake. Also the hills are described as being `scarred' from the recourses being taken out of them. During the course of the book, the trees and land in Africa are constantly

moving and swallowing up the travellers. It is sort of forcing them towards Kurtz and barring their retreat. This in my mind is the land and the spirit of what `used to be' rebelling against the colonizers that include the travellers searching for Kurtz. The evilness and greed of what was taking place is unimaginable and so this spirit being still very much alive is defiantly very realistic.

Colonization, greed and the mistreatment of human people happens all the time in our current day life. It is very sad, but true that we are living in one of the (if not the) biggest powers of imperialism ever. In Iraq for instance, America left Sadam in Iraq during the first gulf war for a reason. America had the power and the resources to do exactly what we are doing now back then. It was all about the oil, and sadly but truly oil was not even a necessity anymore. Technology has grown so much that we now obtain the power to generate enough electricity and power through wind alone. America has the ability to run cars off of water rather than gas, but if we look at where American president and his family had their money we clearly can see the problem. It was all invested in the oil business. Why was it so great that the vice president of American Mr Cheany was heading up a campaign to salvage the oil fields? Was it such a big surprise that he also had money invested in the whole oil business as well? This is one example of a current day situation that is reflected to the greatest extent in the wonderful novel Heart of Darkness. This book was an excellent portrayal of the evilness and suffering caused by imperialistic powers exercising their power in the wrong ways. It also helps us understand the suffering that took place in Africa.

The Significance of Idealism in Heart of Darkness

One of the prevalent themes in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is **idealism**, a seemingly inescapable component of human nature. Conrad addresses the desirability of such a quality, and his stance on this can be discerned through his use of symbolism, underlying myths, and language. He uses the background presence of the Company and the characters of Kurtz and Marlow to criticise the surface prettiness of idealism, which serves to disguise uglier intentions and leads ultimately to darkness.

One who falls to such darkness, the tragic hero Kurtz, harbours high ideals that veil a possible hypocrisy and may precipitate his mental and spiritual degradation. By most accounts a "remarkable" man, he is the epitome of the culture and civilisation of Europe – a **"universal genius"** and an **"emissary of pity and science and progress".** Yet he is a man of contrasts. For example, his idea of justice is given form in his painting of **"a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch".** The light, however, cannot hope to penetrate the sombre darkness, just as Kurtz cannot see the lighted candle hovering before his eyes as he pronounces, **"I am lying here in the dark waiting for death"** .

Additionally, in the report he has written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, the contrast comes sharply into play through words. He writes of **"a power for good practically unbounded"** among other altruistic notions. Impossible to overlook, however, is the prophetic postscriptum: "**Exterminate all the**

brutes!". Kurtz, whose **"immense plans"** are lost, or perhaps twisted, by abandonment and solitude, is a metaphor for a humanity which is capable of anything, even the most immense of darkness. Restraint, like the rotten fence in the story, falls away all too easily (though restraint is ironically exhibited by the cannibals on the boat), and Kurtz (like the manager and the brick maker) is hollow inside, and try as he might to **"swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him"**, nothing could fill that void but an echoing wilderness.

On the other hand, the Company, a collaboration of imperialistic notions, hides its core of darkness behind noble ideas of civilisation and commerce. At the beginning of the story, Marlow defines the Company as being **"run for profit",** an ironic retort to his aunt's **"emissary of light"**. The trading Company, as a model for colonialism, has as its visible aim a **"heavenly mission to civilise"** the **"darker"** regions of the world. However, elements of foreshadowing indicate a more sinister aspect to the Company. It is located in a **"white sepulchre"** of a city, and the description of its physical structure is reminiscent of Fresleven's remains – the **"grass sprouting between the stones".**

The two knitting women whom Marlow encounters guard the **"door of Darkness"** – a door that leads to the schemes and bureaucracy of an empire that holds the fate of millions in its hand. The women are symbolic of two of the three Fates who control the destiny of humankind, knit black wool, representing the dark-skinned natives of Africa. The true face behind the mask of the Company's idealism, as Marlow finds out, is in the grove of death he stumbles upon. In stark contrast, immediately after the horrific discovery, Marlow meets an impeccably-dressed accountant who is possessed of a mentality that enables him to say, with indifference, **"When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages – hate them to the death"**. These encounters are perhaps some of the very first chisels to chip away at Marlow's ideals.

It is through this divesting of long-held and **cherishedidealism** – reminiscent to him of childhood – that Marlow truly begins to gain insight into the human condition. In his journey into the heart of the Congo (a journey that has a symbolic counterpart and bears similarities to mythic rites of initiation), he is confronted with savagery and an unforgiving humanity that bring him closer to despair. Yet, it is through despair and a leaving behind of acceptable society that Marlow can be made privileged to a vast knowledge. He grows cynical with the Company's ideals, and sees the imperialists as trying to conquer something much more immense than could be conceived.

Furthermore, he starts to discard his own convictions, such as his revulsion of lies, by letting the **"papier-maché Mephistopheles"** believe in his non-existent influence in Europe. However, this near-lie may actually represent spiritual progress, as rivets (the motive behind the lie) have become to him **"a symbol of the redeeming ideas of civilisation, the ideas of humanity and solidarity which enable man to constrain hostile nature"**. Marlow confesses with true clarity, **"... what I wanted was a certain quantity of rivets – and rivets were what really Mr. Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it"** (46). Marlow's most significant lie is perhaps to the Intended, when he chooses not to reveal Kurtz's expiating last words **– "The horror! The horror!"** (118).

It is a sign of his new-found knowledge that he does not unthinkingly respond to the Intended as he did his aunt. He lies to the Intended because the "truth" was **"too dark altogether"** and he perceives that **"a part of Kurtz, the noblest part, the part he "Intended" has in fact survived the powers of darkness"** (Boyle 115).

The story, in fact, ends on a hopeful note of idealism – within the **"heart of an immense darkness"**lies an imperfect and fleeting light, and though transient like a flash of lightning, it is our attempt to **"live in the flicker"** that ultimately redeems us.

Is Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' Racist?

Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness follows one white man's nightmarish journey into the interior of Africa. Aboard a British ship called the Nellie, three men listen to a man named Marlow recount his journey into Africa up the Congo River in a steam boat as an agent for a Belgian ivory trading Company.

Marlow says that he witnesses brutality and hate between the white ivory hunters and the native African people. Marlow becomes entangled in a power struggle within the Company, and finally learns the truth about the mysterious Kurtz, a mad agent who has become both a god and a prisoner of the "native Africans." After "rescuing" Kurtz from the native African people, Marlow watches in horror as Kurtz succumbs to madness, disease, and finally death.

The description of African people in Heart of Darkness is disgusting. They are seen as and referred to as **savages**. This is what the narrator says about the Africans and Africa: "It (Africa) was unearthly and the men (Africans) were — no, they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They (Africans) howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar."

That is not enough because there is some more of this kind of description: ". . . as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rich walls, of peaked grass roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling . . . The prehistoric man (the African) was cursing us (white men), praying to us, welcoming us — who could tell"

The structure and style of Heart of Darkness is the first challenge. We have a narrator reporting Marlow's narration of Marlow's experiences in Africa. This is a story inside another story, inside a story! We may say that technically, Heart of Darkness ceases to be Conrad's story and therefore if the story is racist, then Conrad is not necessarily racist!

The story is partially Marlow's because only what is remembered or deemed important by him gets to be narrated. It is also partially the narrator's story because his record of what he heard Marlow say is his sole experience. We are, therefore, faced by a situation

where we should not fully ascribe to either Conrad or Marlow. Again: technically the story operates from several "subsequent" points of view. We keep on saying: who is racist here?

Chinua Achebe, Africa's most prominent novelist, who happens to find the novel racist, thinks that Marlow speaks for Conrad because Conrad does **"not hint, clearly and adequately at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters."**

Achebe's assertion that Marlow speaks for Conrad is further strengthened by the fact that Conrad himself makes a journey similar to Marlow's down the Congo River in 1890. It is the nature of literature to be wholly or very partially autobiographical.

Those who agree with Achebe insist on the point that: in the nineteenth century where adventure novels are heavily loaded with the author's experiences the authors tended to agree to be associated with their major characters. Conrad, who tended, throughout his life, to see the multiple conflicting dimensions of one thing, would definitely not want to disassociate himself from Marlow, who undertakes the same journey as his creator

For Achebe, Heart of Darkness is racist because it projects the image of Africa as "the other world, the antithesis of Europe . . . the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot. I do not doubt Conrad's great talents. Even Heart of Darkness has its memorably good passages and moments

The "Achebe school" is also angered by the portrayal of the Thames River as representation of modernity against the savage muddiness and hazardous Congo River of Africa. There is also the "wild and gorgeous apparition of an (African) woman" pitied against the serene civilised mood of the intended (white woman). The "worst insult" is the pitying of the thoughtful life-like white men against the grunting men of Africa.

Those who disagree with Achebe and company put across a series of arguments that revert back to the ideological environment under which the novel was conceived and written. Their argument is that the writing of Heart of Darkness was done at a time when considering Africans as savages as and lesser beings than non-Africans was the norm.

They point out that Conrad set his story in the Belgian (King Leopold II's) Congo of the 1890s when the Africans in the Congo region were being forced to extract ivory and rubber for the Empire at gunpoint. Those who resisted got killed or dismembered and to imagine a kind of discourse that saw blacks as having equal humanity with other races was unthinkable. They even think that Conrad attacks imperialism because he identifies it with clear plunder and not the pretensions of civilizing the savage and spreading Christianity.

However, even then, Conrad's attack of imperialism has its contradictions. Conrad questions the morality of colonialism and exploitation but he does not question the colonial mission itself. Although Conrad's Africans are pitiable, they are nonetheless

niggers and are victimised quite as much by their own stupidity and ignorance as by European brutality.

One of Kurtz's last utterances: "Exterminate the brutes!" demonstrates that the term "going native" does not mean becoming one with the savages. Despite the delirium, Kurtz knows the clear cut racial divisions and his white man's duties in Africa.

In addition, "Darkness" in Heart of Darkness tends to be metaphorical. Darkness holds a multiplicity of meanings.

The only clear meaning of darkness in the novel seem to be one's descending to inhuman levels of thought and behaviour — like Kurtz and the whole Belgian colonial establishment. In Heart of Darkness evil is portrayed as African and if it is also African that is because some white men in the Heart of Darkness behave like Africans!

Reading Heart of Darkness, we are certain that for the western readers of the 1890s, it must have shown the extremities of conquest, of course, but, it definitely must have confirmed the western concept of Africa as the land of savages. If the novel caused sympathy towards the African, it was that sympathy one has for an animal in agony, not fellow human beings.

Character of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness is an important novella in terms of pre 1914 literature and is considered by many one of the most important books in literature. In the 1890's Conrad sailed up the river Congo, so the novel was written from a good knowledge of the surroundings and personal experience of colonialism and the oppression that was a major part of Africa in the late 1800's. Although slavery was abolished in most places, slavery was still a major part of African life in those days due to many European countries fighting over the prospect of ivory and land and when they did get the land they slaved the Africans either keeping them in Africa to help with the ivory trade or shipping them off to Europe to be slaves there. In the novel Conrad presents Kurtz as a mystical being a god almost to the native people but he also shows him to be an evil and sinister man with a 'heart of darkness' he does this by not actually presenting Kurtz as a human but a figure a 'vapour of the earth.' Conrad also leads the reader along by not actually meeting Kurtz until the very end the rest of the book relies on peoples tales of Kurtz and what he has done which lead us to believe that he is a supernatural being.

The role of the narrator in the novel is a key part of what makes the novel so appealing because it is the story teller Marlow who has been through all of it, although there is one other narrator at the start of the novella who sets the scene. The primary narrator also talks about Marlow in a strange way he claims that he was sat in a way that 'resembled an idol.' This infers that Marlow is a very wise and very powerful figure. He also talks a lot about the light and the dark 'the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light.' Only the gloom to the west. Brooding over the upper reaches became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.' This extract

paints a very vivid picture in the reader's minds it talks about getting closer to Africa every minute and the evil is just waiting there as if angered by their presence. This could be a warning sign as to how the story could end up as the narrator is referring to Africa as the gloom, when the first narrator ends it is quite difficult to see where he ends and Marlow begins but it becomes clearer when you read on. But before the first narrator stops he tells us that Marlow has 'the propensity to spin yarns.' This means he has the habit of over exaggerating this gives the reader doubts if this whole story is true and the way Marlow talks about Kurtz later on in the story as a supernatural being may well be and over exaggeration of Kurtz's power. This makes the reader feel doubtful and question Marlow's integrity as he may be exaggerating some parts of the story particularly Kurtz, and this may make the reader unable to trust Marlow's farfetched stories

Although this has been said there was absolutely no mention of Kurtz until page 38 were Marlow is talking to the accountant Marlow is keen to find out what Kurtz has done and why he is so praised and feared all over Africa he asks the accountant who Mr Kurtz was and the accountant simply said 'he was a first-class agent.' He then added 'he was a very remarkable person' this is the first time Marlow gets any information about Kurtz and he realises how powerful and inspirational this man really was. This mention of Kurtz only makes the reader want to read and as Kurtz is talked about as a supernatural being and as the story progresses the reader is more aware of the impact that Kurtz has had and is more anxious to meet him.

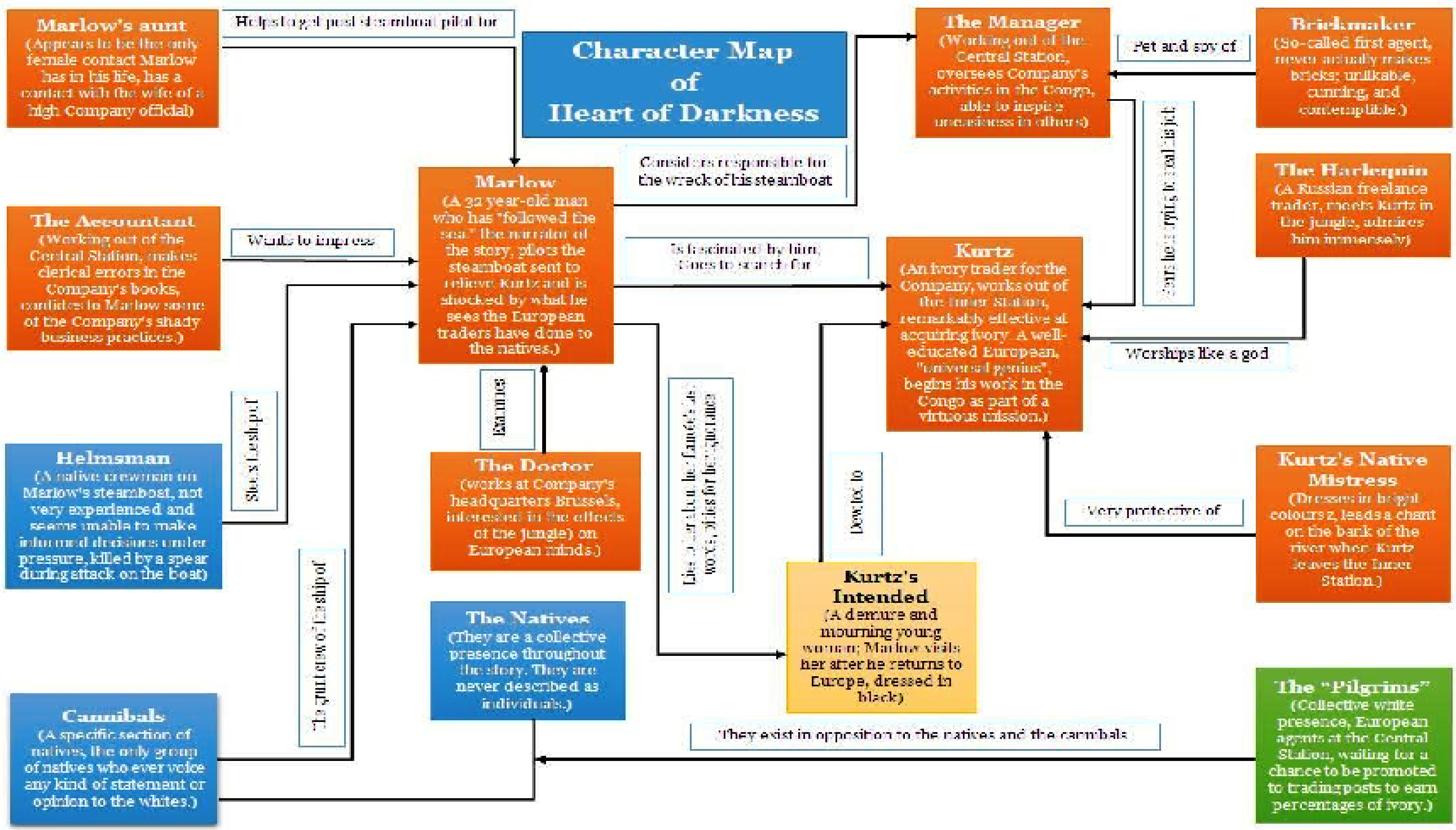
The setting is a big part of how the story unfolds, and the closer the boat gets to Kurtz up the river the more sinister and edgy the descriptions of the settings are. Conrad shows vivid pictures of sinister rainforests and murky rivers. 'silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.' This could show the silent power of the jungle just lying in wait for colonialism to end and for those people to go. Conrad writes about the jungle in unexplainable darkness and is linking this with Kurtz's path of destruction up the river 'for me it crawled towards Kurtz exclusively.' This shows the way that Marlow had somehow become obsessed with the finding of Kurtz and now it had consumed him so much that all he thought about was him. The forest had done that to him as there was so much evil in the leading to Kurtz it was hard not to see it 'a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart.' The jungle also seemed to become an enemy to Marlow as there was an heir of uneasiness all around this is because of the way Conrad writes about the setting the way he talks about the darkness the impenetrability of it, it seemed like a fortress was surrounding Kurtz and slowly Marlow was getting to it.

Kurtz is in many ways the most important character of the novella and although he is not present for most of the book the reader feels that there was something of him there in the way that the forest was described and the way that the river seemed to be against Marlow, there always seemed to be a part of Kurtz there the evil of his mind. Conrad makes this possible by making Kurtz a god like being a 'vapour of the earth' and his mind and spirit was everywhere in the jungle that he owned. He was described and praised by many people 'whatever he was he was not common' but even though we hear

so much about him there is no evidence of he has done they are all just rumours and maybe exaggerations. Kurtz was described and talked about by most people Marlow came across but he was said to have been an evil person only when Marlow was sailing up the river there are hints of his immense evil. 'the inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily' this could show that maybe Marlow might be going insane slowly, the constant thinking of Kurtz and his power may have slowly been making Marlow insane. And when the realisation dawns upon him that he might not even be able to see Kurtz he realises that '"now I will never hear him." The man presented himself as a voice.' This shows the amount that Marlow respects and honours Kurtz he can't even imagine him being a real person. Kurtz was definitely a mystery to Marlow because he doesn't know anything about Kurtz and what he has done all that has been said about him was that he was an extraordinary man.

Kurtz's effect on others was very strong. He made people believe that he was something special something amazing and people worshiped him for it a good example of a person that worshiped Kurtz was the harlequin character. The harlequin was in awe of Kurtz's abilities and talked about him as if he was a god or a supernatural person as if he could not be real. Marlow was in awe of how much he had got in such little time. 'Everything belonged to him – but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own.' This is a very important quote as it shows what Marlow really knows about Kurtz and his powers have made him so great but Marlow asked himself what made him so powerful how did he become this great and how many powers of darkness did Kurtz himself belong to. 'He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land - I mean literally.' But ultimately the prospect of Kurtz was too much for Marlow as when Marlow does finally see Kurtz he had fallen ill and was facing death 'it was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze.'

Kurtz's character in many ways is a real character and could be a realistic and real person and therefore is convincing. Although he shows unremorseful evil all through the book and is seen to be the heart of darkness when Marlow finally does meet him he seems to be quite sane. 'Believe me or not his intelligence was perfectly clear' he also shows remorse with his dying words 'the horror, the horror.' This is open to many interpretations and is a very famous quote but in my opinion Kurtz has realised that mankind given the chance can do horrific things like what he did in Africa and only when he dies he realises this. Although the character is convincing to be a man of pure evil, there may have been some exaggeration in the novel as at the start of the novel the anonymous narrator does tell us Marlow has the 'propensity to spin a yarn.' And therefore Kurtz's whole story and background could be an exaggeration. But in my opinion Kurtz was a very real character and was a convincing and intriguing character all the way through the novel.


Character Map of Heart of Darkness
Marlow's aunt (Appears to be the only female contact Marlow has in his life, has a contact with the wife of a high Company official)
Helps to get post of steamboat pilot for
The Accountant (Working out of the Central Station, makes clerical errors in the Company's books, confides to Marlow some of the Company's shady business practices.)
Wants to impress
Marlow (A 32 year-old man who has "followed the sea," the narrator of the story, pilots the steamboat sent to relieve Kurtz and is shocked by what he sees the European traders have done to the natives.)
Considers responsible for the wreck of his steamboat
Is fascinated by him, Goes to search for
The Manager (Working out of the Central Station, oversees Company's activities in the Congo, able to inspire uneasiness in others)
Pet and spy of
Brickmaker (So-called first agent, never actually makes bricks; unlikable, cunning, and contemptible.)
The Harlequin (A Russian freelance trader, meets Kurtz in the jungle, admires him immensely)
Kurtz (An ivory trader for the Company, works out of the Inner Station, remarkably effective at acquiring ivory. A well-educated European, "universal genius", begins his work in the Congo as part of a virtuous mission.)
Worships like a god
Helmsman (A native crewman on Marlow's steamboat, not very experienced and seems unable to make informed decisions under pressure, killed by a spear during attack on the boat)
The Doctor (works at Company's headquarters Brussels, interested in the effects of the jungle) on European minds.)
Kurtz's Native Mistress (Dresses in bright colours, leads a chant on the bank of the river when Kurtz leaves the Inner Station.)
Very protective of
The Natives (They are a collective presence throughout the story. They are never described as individuals.)
Kurtz's Intended (A demure and mourning young woman; Marlow visits her after he returns to Europe, dressed in black)
Cannibals (A specific section of natives, the only group of natives who ever voice any kind of statement or opinion to the whites.)
They exist in opposition to the natives and the cannibals
The "Pilgrims" (Collective white presence, European agents at the Central Station, waiting for a chance to be promoted to trading posts to earn percentages of ivory.)

They proclaimed to educate the people civility,

But how bewildered are beasts they at their brutality,

But fondness got they to make cities devastated,

Graveyards everywhere have they populated,

The world has never seen such a tyrant hypocrite,

To fellowmen they are snare, to beasts affectionate.

Twilight in Delhi

Ahmed Ali

Ahmed Ali (1910 in New Delhi – 14 January 1994 in Karachi) was an Indian (later Pakistani) novelist, poet, critic, translator, diplomat and scholar. His writings include Twilight in Delhi (1940), his first novel.

Born in Delhi, India, Ahmed Ali was educated at Aligarh and Lucknow universities, graduating with first-class and first in the order of merit in both B.A. (Honours), 1930 and M.A. English, 1931. He taught at leading Indian universities including Lucknow and Allahabad from 1932–46 and joined the Bengal Senior Educational Service as professor and head of the English Department at Presidency College, Calcutta (1944–47). Ali was the BBC's Representative and Director in India during 1942–45. During the Partition of India, he was the British Council Visiting Professor to the University of China in Nanking as appointed by the British government of India. When he tried to return to India in 1948, K.P.S. Menon (then India's Ambassador to China) did not let him and he was forced to move to Pakistan.

In 1948, he moved to Karachi. Later, he was appointed Director of Foreign Publicity, Government of Pakistan. At the behest of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, he joined the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1950. The first file he received was marked 'China' and when he opened it; it was blank. He went to China as Pakistan's first envoy and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic in 1951.

Literary career: - Ali started his literary career at a young age and became cofounder of the All-India Progressive Writers' Movement and Association with the publication of Angare in 1932, a collection of short stories by four young friends, which was later banned by the British Government of India in March 1933. Shortly afterward Ali and Mahmud-uz-Zaffar announced the formation of a "League of Progressive Authors", which was later to expand and become the All-India Progressive Writers' Association. Ali presented his paper "Art kaTaraqqi-PasandNazariya" (A Progressive View of Art) in its inaugural Conference in 1936. A pioneer of the modem Urdu short story, Ali's works include collections of short stories: "Angare" (Flames), 1934; HamariGali (Our Lane), 1940; QaidKhana (The Prison-house), 1942; and Maut Se Pehle (Before Death), 1945.

Ali achieved international fame with his first novel written in English Twilight in Delhi, which was published by The Hogarth Press in London in 1940. During the 1950s, Ahmed Ali worked for the Pakistan Foreign Service, establishing embassies in Morocco and China.

Twilight in Delhi : A Critical Review

Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* is a marvellous novel. It brings before our eyes a true "*motion-picture"* of how the Muslims of the sub-continent used to live their religious, social, cultural, single and collective life during the tumultuous years of 1857-1919. Another important thing to note is that, Ahmad Ali shows us all the positive as well as negative aspects of the Muslim Cultural life of sub-continent. So there is no taboo binding the hands of the writer to omit this or that part of the life: he presents life as a whole in all its aspects and colours. The details of **Mehro's** marriage with **Meraj**, **the son of Bhopal millionaire**, added with the details of **Mushtari Bai** and **Babban Jan**, provide ample proof for our statements in this respect. We also find details of two pastimes that were very popular at those times among the gentlemen and others: pigeon-flying and kite-flying. There would be only a few such cities in the world which have become living landmark in the history or civilization of the world at large and of the related country in particular. Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) is one. Rome is another. Delhi is still another. Delhi can boast rightfully of a culture and civilization that has its long, deep roots going back into the 2nd century B.C. Built in *1453 B.C.* by the name of Hastnapur by Raja Yudhishtra after the great battle of Mahabharat, Delhi had seen many ups and down in its long history. It has seen the age of Kauravs and the Pandaus. It has seen the rise and fall of the Khiljis. It has seen the regime of the Sayyeds. And lastly it has seen the supreme, superb and colourful reign of the great Moghals; Babur, Huamyun, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, the grand and great line culminating in Bahadur Shah (*Zafar*), the last of the Moghal dynasty who was overthrown by the Britiehers, or ***Farangis***, as the people of the sub-continent including the Delhiites used to call them. **According to the novelist himself**:

"Destruction is in its foundations and blood is in its soil. It has seen the fall of many a glorious kingdom and listened to the groans of birth. It is the symbol of life and Death …"

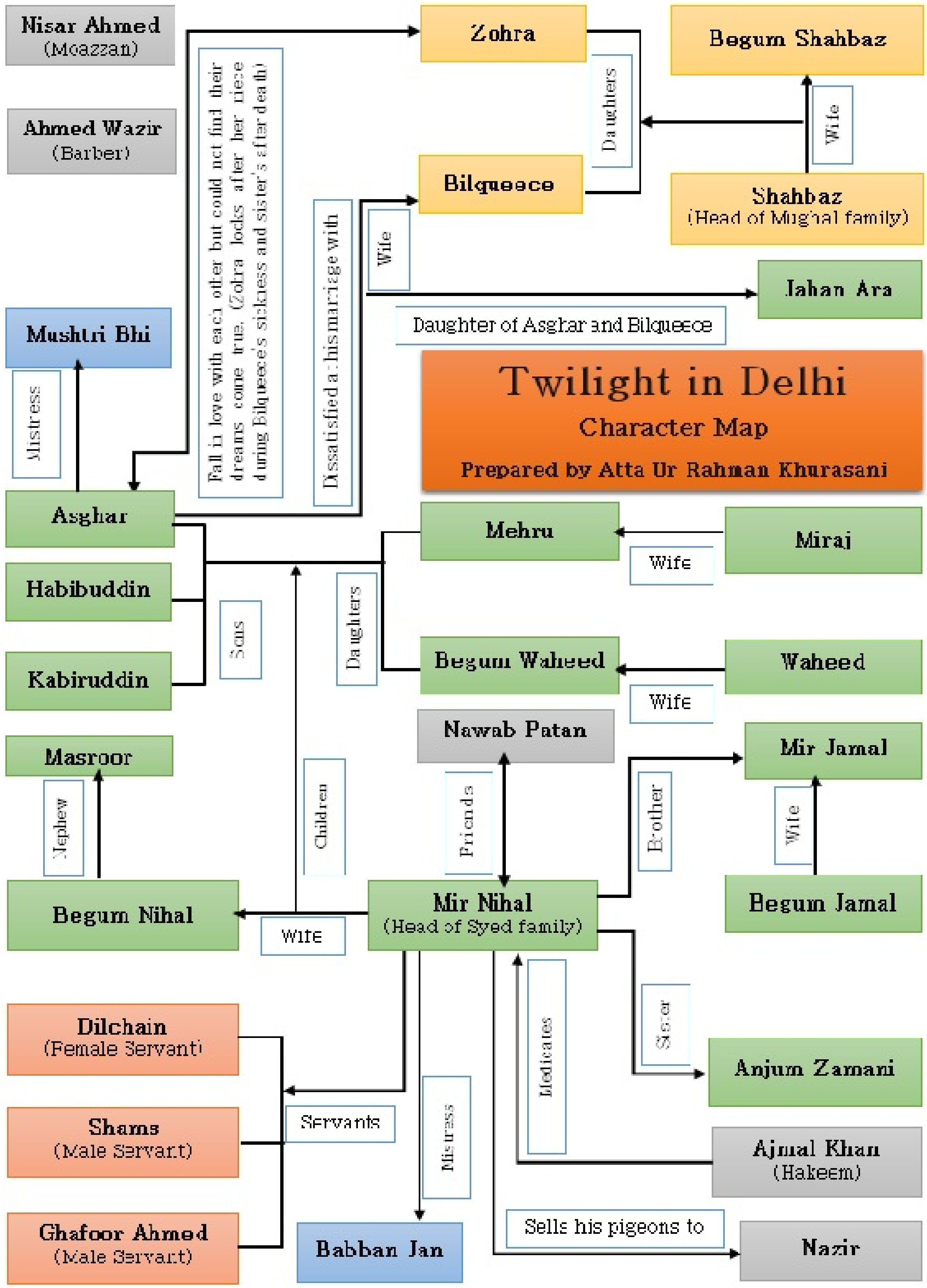
Ahmad Ali has seen the lanes, by-lanes and streets of Delhi with great affection. So Ahmad Ali has drawn a detailed picture of the life going on in these lanes and by-lanes during the last years of the 19th and the earlier years of the 20th century. The life is the true representation of the decaying Indian Muslim civilization during the period referred to above.

When this novel was published in 1940 by Hogarth Press, London, a lot of reviews appreciations about the same appeared not only in India but also in England. The novel gained spontaneous attention of the literary critics in India and abroad. One of the main aims of Ahmad Ali in writing this novel in English language was to acquaint the English-speaking world about the Indian civilization and its presentation through the life of novel's characters. In his essay entitled "Some Reflections on the Novel" Ahmad Ali himself writes:

"The Novel is not an imitation but representation of life and its changing shadows, reflecting their movement and directing the changing scene of human activity in all ages and societies…. For the canvas of life is too vast and can be presented only in the moments of shattered desire or contemplation calm and rising hopes and ambitions. In all forms it shows man and society their true

semblance, and life, its picture which, in the movement, life itself does not often understand."

So, Ahmad Ali lived a rich life and created, out of that, a rich, living and throbbing novel as such which is Twilight in Delhi. If we care about the unity of impression and vitality of life, we are to find it only in Twilight in Delhi. Loo-stricken life being lived/passed in the lanes and by-lanes of Delhi right from the darkness of dejection to the radiating hopefulness has been immortalized in its own subtle and sublime manner by Ahmad Ali.



Plot Construction of Twilight in Delhi

Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi is a well-knit and brilliantly constructed novel. It consists of four parts and every part has the chapters which gave additional meaning to the course of events. The plot is constructed in a particular style—in the act of narration. Every character is in descriptive or in evaluating style which gives additional significance and beauty to the plot. Mostly the plot revolves around the family of Mir Nihal representing on symbolical level the Muslim class's present and past life. The Novelist Ahmed All relates a person's tale in this novel that, in the end, looks alienated and apart from the surroundings and all this happens only through his out dated attitude in the present condition.

Ahmed Ali has utilized his events of the story to construct an organic whole in the shape of plot of the novel "Twilight in Delhi". This thing tells us about his expertise in the field of novel-writing or fiction-writing as such. The novel under reference has basically been designed by the writer to give us a rich glimpse of the Indian Muslim society along with its customs, traditions and ways. This purpose has been achieved by the writer by taking a large number of characters from the span of 1911-1919 from the city of Delhi from among the Muslim population. As it is not inside his goal to tell the readers anything about the Hindu society, so he does not include any Hindu character in the novel, so much so that even the bania (basically the money lender of the sub-continent society) of the novel is Saddiq, a Muslim, although mostly Hindus were the banias of the sub-continent.

The plot of Twilight is Delhi "seems purposeful in every way. There are many characters and events only included in the novel to make the novel realistic and to give a true colouring to the Muslim Indian society as such. NawabPuttan is one of such characters. His character has nothing important to do with the advancement of the story. Still he is very important for the reasons that he is the representation of Nawabi culture and life. For giving complete a social picture of the Indian Muslim Society, Ahmed Ali has told us in detail about Ramazan and the traditions of Ramazan. He tells us a detail about how Eid is celebrated, and including that famous, classical verse used at this occasion by numberless people:

"It is the day of Eid, my dear,
Ah come, let me embrace thee.
It is the custom and besides
There's time and opportunity "

Mir Nihal, in his sixties has a family, a mistress named Babban Jan from whom he gets mental and sexual levels pleasure. He has a son, Asghar, a boy in twenties, who desperately wants to marry a girl, Bilqeece. His marriage takes place after a huge amount of resistance from Mir Nihal's side. In the background of these events, Ahmed All has portrayed a graphic picture of historical moments of violence and tyranny in this novel and also the pathetic condition of Delhi on a big canvass. The marriage of Asghar is caught in a fiasco and the relations weaken day by day and after Bilqeece's death the whole scenario changes. Asghar thinks himself responsible for her death but Bilqeece'syounger sister Zohra again turns Asgher to the beauty of life. Zohra, a young girl, full of charming and alluring beauty, fascinates him to marry her but finally nothing happens according to his desires. In the end we see Mir Nihal as a paralyze

has faced many hard blows from fate like, death of Babban Jan, death of his pigeons and the end of his rule—all pathetic. His wife Begum Nihal, who has spent her life honestly and devotedly, is unable to retain happiness in Mir Nihal's life.

In the background, the plot of the novel advances through the story of the freedom struggle of the people of India and of the Indian Muslims. We read about the fall of Delhi and about the fateful time for Jama Masjid, Delhi, as well as for the Muslims of Delhi. We read about the fires burning petrol depots and the royal canopy at Delhi-Darbar before it was held. We read about rallies, procession, agitation, marches and strikes. We read about the non-cooperative movement. So we see the advancement of the struggle for freedom going in the background of the story of the novel. But the thing is so well knit into the texture of the plot that we are ready to take it as an integral part of the main story.

The story, which started from the first section, shows every character's attitude and ordinary view about life. All the subsequent events end in the fourth part where we get not the conclusion but the actual condition that if they spend the same life they shall not be able to retain themselves in the changing conditions.

The plot, on the whole, is compact; there is very little irrelevant or unnecessary. Even the smallest details promote the action, produce the necessary atmosphere and fulfil the purpose of the novel. The concentration on the main theme is well maintained to achieve the desired purpose. All the strings are gathered at the end to give the final touch. Thus the plot construction in Twilight in Delhi, is nothing but remarkable. There can be arguments that the plot has some drawbacks or loose ends but it was never easy to pack a rapidly changing culture in limited pages and Ahmed Ali's realistic technique in describing the actual conditions is not only brilliant but also shows his precision in every way.

Art of Characterization in "Twilight in Delhi"

In "Twilight in Delhi" Ahmed All has used descriptive method to show the characters in the development of novel's plot. Every character is close to the actual condition of Delhi. Ali's realistic mode of expression in describing the relation of plot and character is remarkable. The opening section of the novel and its first chapter seems as a prologue to city's actual condition and its inhabitants. When we go through the novel, we find that the writer has used the art of characterization as a nice tool to realize his end. He has a plot and for the completion of the plot the characters come at the stage at a particular time and then leave the stage. Still there is one central character that is most of the time there in one or the other manner. This is the main male character of Mir Nihal who plays the pivotal role in the novel. All the events have a direct or indirect bearing at his character: all the characters are related to his character in one or the other way. So the spot light remains most of the time on Mir Nihal.

Mir Nihal's character has been portrayed with utmost precision and accuracy. He is a man who has witnessed the last event/episode of the surrender of Delhi on 14th September, 1857, the fateful day, with his own eyes. He is a patriot in the core of his

heart. He feels pain and torture at Hindustan's slavery but he believes in direct use of sword (i.e., weapons) to liberate his country whereas people are resorting to some other "useless" ways and means, like rallies, marches, strike and non-cooperative movement.

Mir Nihal's character is a representative of the older generation who has seen the country going into the clutches of slavery with his own eyes. So he hates the rulers. On the other end is Asghar, his younger son, who likes the English fashion and ways. Although, he also represents Indian Muslim culture in his own way but he belongs to the younger generation and, as such, differs with Mir Nihal. Both of them are having their own singing and dancing girls: Mir Nihal has Babban Jan and Mir Asghar has Mushtari Bai but the former "keeps" Babban Jan till her death whereas the latter leaves Mushtari Bai in the lurch and starts loving Bilqueece so intensively that he leaves no stone unturned for her achievement as a wife. It is another story that he, even then, does not keep himself limited and goes out on his romantic adventures or errands to find out new women for him.

Ahmad Ali is depicting the story of the dying Indian Muslim society in his novel, so he picks and chooses from the society only such characters that can be helpful to him in the context. These characters may be as overwhelming as Mir Nihal and Asghar and these may be as summarized as Kabiruddin, the elder brother of Asghar, and Habibuddin. We hardly see Kabiruddin in any scene of the novel. Similar is the case with Ashfaq, the nephew of Begum Jamal, who has married with the eldest daughter of Begum and Mirza Shahbaz Beg. These are the characters that perform their duty behind the scenes. Even Ahmad Wazir, the family barber of Mir Nihal, has to perform his duty at two places in the novel. Dilchain and Ghafoor do the duties of servants in zanana and mardana of Mir Nihal's house. Once we see that Dilchain wears men's clothes (at the age of near about 60) and dances in a lewd manner on the occasion of the marriage of Asghar. But all this is done to represent the dying Indian Muslim culture.

As the society depicted in the novel is basically a male-oriented society, so we see that generally males are taking lead in all the matters of importance and generally females are lagging behind or following them. Strangely enough, if we look deeply into the matter, there are two trees growing in the middle of the courtyard of Mir Nihal's house. One is the date-palm tree. It is tall and manly. The other is the henna tree. It is small and womanly. And, as such, the "male" date palm tree has been talked about at more times and in more manners (although we never see any dates being plucked from the tree!) than the "female" henna tree has been talked about (although henna leaves are practically plucked from the tree and applied for practical utilization!).

Ahmed Ali also shows a complete picture of female class. Female characters like Begum Nihal, Dilchain, Babban Jan, Begum Shahbaz, Bilqueece, and Zohra—all of them are the part and parcel of this man-made community. They have their own ways of living which the outside world is unable to comprehend and they themselves are not able to understand their frustrated life. It seems that Ali has tried his level best to maintain a connection between the characters and the historical events. The events of the 14 September 1857 which are described in the Twilight of Delhi, have close relation with them. There are also many historical events which are portrayed in this novel like Mir Nihal and Begum Nihal's remembering about the pathetic conditions of British

So if we look at Ali's art of characterization on large canvas we can say, he has used direct as well as indirect way of describing the characters. Every character, from its appearance to his way of life, is remarkably close to reality. We see that different characters of the novel Twilight in Delhi (by Ahmed Ali) advance the plot of the novel in their own peculiar manner So it can be said that Ahmed Ali has superbly portrayed the condition of Delhi and her inhabitants and his art of characterization shows his sagacity and brilliance of thought.

Major Themes in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali

Ahmed Ali’s classic novel Twilight in Delhi is a nostalgic tale set in nineteenth-century Delhi between two revolutionary moments: subsequent to the collapse of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, and prior to the rise of the independence movement which culminated in the violent partition of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. In the novel, Ali depicted a scene after early morning prayers on the day of Eid at the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi. He wrote: **When the prayer ended they all began to embrace, falling on each other’s necks, pressing the chests together warmly. All those who knew one another went through this show and expression of affection. And the lovers found the opportunity of their lives. A middle-aged man quoted these lines to a young man with arms open for an embrace:**

‘It is the day of Eed, my dear,
Ah come, let me embrace thee.
It is the custom and besides
There’s time and opportunity …’ (Ali 1940: 95)

Ali, in his novel, depicted most movingly and melancholically **the loss of a culture and way of life** in the city of Delhi as it was altered by the rebellion of 1857. He presented this moment as a vestige of a pre-modern cultural Indo-Islamic milieu that was in the process of a traumatic disruption at the hands of colonialism. The above incident, although of a literary nature, demonstrates that a context and environment for the expression of same-sex attraction and love existed in Muslim societies.

The Struggle over Memory: - In “Twilight in Delhi” memory is seen both as source of personal identity and as a burden preventing to attain happiness. Each character is involved in a struggle to remember but more importantly in a struggle to forget certain aspects of their past. Mir Nihal the protagonist of the Novel wants to seek refuge in the past. He wants to live in past not is present. The other characters, like Begum Nihal, Begum Jamal and the elder sons of Mir Nihal, all of them are found in struggling condition. The grandeur and wonderful Muslim’s past, in which they were rulers, not wipe out from Mir Nihal and his family’s mind, like Asghar seemed rebellious but in the end of the Novel he was caught in the trap of cruel and remorseless fate. The city “Delhi” had faced the rise and fall of many Kings and princes like a poet said.

Delhi which was once the Jewel of the world,
Where dwelt only the loved ones of Fate,
Which has now been ruined by the hand of time,

I, m a resident of that storm-tossed place . . . .

But now the present scenario has impolitely changed people who were rulers now they are under the domination of colonial forces. So Mir Nihal like madam Ranevsky in "The cherry orchard" is not able to forget the grandeur of past his management, attitude and behaviour in his family totally reflect the king like way as Mughals did in past. He never able to comprehend the change in his own family when Asghar showed his consent to marry Bilqueece, the problem solved and everything happened according to his will. Ahmad Ali showed all the characters and especially Mir Nihal in a struggling position, the whole family and the surrounding area's people never able to come out from the memory of their glorious past.

Modernity vs. the Old India: - With the arrival of the British colonial forces in the sub-continent everything had changed. People who were habitual in living under the kings of were not able to face a change which as far as British was concern a change which civilizes the Brutes, the major character or the protagonist of the Novel, Mir Nihal never able to compensate with the new traditions. Britishers gave change to their style of living and the government structure but he wants to live according to the past like Ahmed Ali relate in part 4 chapters 4.

"New ways and ideas had come into being a hybrid culture which had nothing in it of the past was forcing itself upon Hindustan a wedge-people of Indian and Western ways which he failed to understand. The whole culture of India was a mixture of two cultures the new generation want to adopt the English culture like in the beginning of the Novel Asghar's first appearance was in wearing English shirts and Mir Nihal scolded on it His sudden anger on him showed his hatred and non-accommodateable attitude towards and modernity."

He was a backward person like in the mid-end of the Novel. The episode when he tried to give punishment to the children he said to Dilchain that you go and take my sword and he took his sword and children seemed terrified not in real sense, this shows that he did not left the past, but he did not want to think about it.

Theme of Sex: - Sex is the most important theme of the novel. All the women characters in the novel were sexually suppressed figures. Mir Nihal, a tall handsome and energetic man, desperately wanted a woman who knew well the art of sex and the art of capturing man. So Babban Jan, a young girl, gave him all these pleasures. When she died his whole world disturbed. He felt a kind of flux in his life, which cannot be full-filled. He had also sexual relations with Dilchain (His Maid) and when she got pregnant Begum Nihal surprised to hear this that she is not a married one and her quarrel with Mir Nihal shows that Mir Nihal's sexual appetite was not satiated from Begum Nihal.

If we look at Delhi's society we came to know that most of the male society went to prostitutes. When they became habitual of them then they were not able to accommodate with their wives because they (wives) were not well-versed in the art of capturing man through sex. We can see that most of the men had no time for their wives.

Asghar was also one of them who went to prostitutes like Mushtari Bai who was a young girl; beautiful, fascinating and charming girl. Asghar often went to her Kotha and became habitual of her. But when he saw Bilqueece he was bewitched by her extreme beauty. He desperately wanted to marry her and after huge amount of reluctance from Mir Nihal he succeeded to marry with her. But later on he felt that she lacked sexual understanding. So Bilqueece was unable to feel the gulf. It wasn't her fault because in Indian culture mostly the women spent her youth in the four walls of Zanana where no male allowed enter in it. So she can't able to understand why her husband left her in the house for weeks. But Begum Shahbaz felt the actual problem or the cause which created the gulf. She quarrelled with him but Asghar was unable to manage the whole issue.

The whole Mir Nihal, s family represent the Muslim class of India and throughout India they have the same life style. Men often satisfy their sexual appetites to go to the prostitutes and women remained ignorant because they had no knowledge about what is going on there.

Passing away of Muslim civilization in India: - One of the Major themes is the passing away of Muslims civilization in India. "Twilight in Delhi" basically showed the decay of Mughal Kingship or the Muslim civilization.

Muslims ruled on India from many centuries but with the arrival of Britishers, the whole civilization had faced a huge set back. Mir Nihal, who lived in the illusions of splendid past, was not able to accommodate with the present condition. His appearance and attitude represent the Muslims community of that time. He was unable to live according to the changed conditions because they felt that this is the most humiliating condition for the Muslims. Like Niven says

"Despite the rhapsodic(passionate) treatment of Asghar's love Bilqueece (Ali's own wife is called Bilqueece), the autumnal mood at the Novel's close the grief-stricken regrets for the Mughal past and the frequent coherence in his prose style, Ali writes less from a romantic than a classic stand point. He recognizes the immutability of the basic elements in human life individual remains the same in every age."

Yet classicism in so far as it refers to recognition of the permanence of the change brought about by the passing of time is perhaps the intention of the Novel's plot.

Symbolism in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali

Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi of been regarded as masterpiece. His writing is immensely visual. He wants to recreate a world which is real, vivid and close to the actual traditional ways of old Delhi. Throughout the whole novel symbolical elements are used vehemently. His direct and indirect ways of using symbolism, is very unique in Pakistani literature. He wanted to go beyond sub-continental sounds and words, to convey the essence of traditional Indo-Muslims culture in which poetry plays a pivotal role. The poetry, use of Urdu words art of narration all seemed remarkable.

"Twilight in Delhi" is a book whose opening description has symbolic significance. It shows the down to earth life of Indians, the delay of Muslim civilization, the darkness in minds or in life which on a literal level is the product their own inefficiencies and mismanagement in handling Govt. or State.

"Night envelopes the city covering it like a blanket. In the dim starlight roofs and houses and by-lanes lie asleep wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing heavily as the heat become oppressive or shoots through the body like pain, in the courtyards, on the roofs, in the by-lanes, on the roads, men sleep on brave beds, half naked, tired after the sore day's labour. A few still well on the other-wise deserted roads, hand in hand, talking; and some have jasmine garlands in their hands. The smell from the flowers escapes, scents a few yards of air around them and dies smothered by the narrow by lanes, from under the plants gutting out of shops, and luck the earthen cups out of which men had drunk milk and thrown away"

All deserted conditions of men and their surrounding shows nation miserable plight under the colonial forces rule.

The title is symbolical as well as metaphorical, symbolical in a way that it symbolizes the downfall or deterioration not only of Delhi but ways of Delhi as well ,people's moral ,religious and social values all were on the verge of death and metaphorical in a way that the title not only refers to the twilight of Delhi but also the Twilight of Mir Nihal

Asghar's character seemed disillusioned as he was a typical Indian Muslim bachelor who was not sexual satiated and spend life without any prior aim of life. His approach seemed un-realistic of the conclusions like in part 1 chapter 2 when he thought about Bilqueece Ahmed Ali's creates.

"His heart begins to beat and he follows her until he overtakes her, and arm in arm they go. But soon the road comes to an end, and in front there is a void, deep and dark and dim, As he looks its depth his head begin to reel, and beads of perspiration came upon his brow. He turns to say is not there upon the brink of that void he finds himself alone, and are unknown fear grips his heart.

The character of Asghar symbolically represents the whole trading Muslim are generation who desperately wanted something near because they in a hodgepodge (jumble) of Indian and British culture. He has got the disillusionment and was not able to foresee the coming circumstances, and it also shown uncertainty and nihilistic attitude from his part because he hadn't the courage to make a charge.

Mir Nihal's family represent the whole Muslim community in India. Mir Nihal's family is an embodiment and passionate picture of the Indian Muslim, who had spent the same type of lining from many centuries. Their sceptic approach, religious atmosphere, beliefs, customs, traditions, thinking and superstitions all can be packed by Ahmed Ali in one family Death of Mir Nihal's pigeons. The chapter in which we came to know about death of Mir Nihal's Pigeons; is highly symbolical. At was turning point in Mir Nihal's life. A healthy tall and handsome person turned into the weakest person in the

whole episode symbolically foretell the defeat of a certain traditional way of life; life which showed the static side of Muslim world life. The habit of keeping pigeons was old nobody thought about at this time so Mir Nihal had to adopt the change but he didn't comprehend the reality or the modern standards.

Cat episode isalso the most symbolic event of the novel. When Mir Nihal went upstairs to release his pogroms he saw feather and the stairs and many more on the roof. When he looked inside the loft he found that there had been massacre. He had forgotten to close the door last night and the cats had found their opportunity to kill many of Mir Nihal's pigeons. Cat is a potent symbol Ali has used repeatedly in his short stories to represent cunning, stealth, and destruction. He also identifies the cat with the British who have succeeded in altering of not destroying these cherished ways of life by introducing new ideologies and mores; which Mir Nihal's generation stands for.

Mir Nihal's Paralysis has highly symbolical meanings. It represents a parting away of old order or the end of the old orthodox beliefs. His desperation increases when came to know about Babban's death. In the last chapter Ahmed Ali relates about his paralyzed condition:

"His days were done and beauty had vanished from the earth. But life remained over which men had no command and must go on.

He was weary and tired, limp like a shaken hand. His world had fallen to pieces all around him, smothered by indifference and death. Yet he was still alive to mope like on owl, and count his days at the merry of time and fate. He lay on the bed in a state of coma, too feeling less to sit up or think. The sun went down and hid his face. The rooks cawed and flew away".

The whole gloomy picture of Mir Nihal's paralyzed condition also shows his authority, or a rule's end. His soul or inward condition is totally shattered, his dominating figure and his grandeur scattered or destroyed. He was more than nothing now.

Begum Nihal's Blindness also shows her lack of comprehension in maintaining or in making proper decisions. Her Blindness also shows the Blindness of that age's women who can't able to manage the matters.

Significance of the Title "Twilight in Delhi"

The name or title of Ahmed Ali's novel as "Twilight in Delhi" is very significant in itself. This is the most proper and appropriate name of the story he has told in the novel. "Twilight" is a word that signifies the short span of time that spreads itself between a dying day and emerging night just as "dawn" is the opposite term that signifies the death of the night and the arrival of the day.

"Twilight in Delhi" deals with the dying culture and civilization of Muslim India as such. If we take Mir Nihal as a symbol of that culture etc. which he really is, we can see the civilization crumbling with our own eyes. When we go through the novel, we find out that

its main male character has passed his middle age and is almost knocking at the door of old age. We are talking of Mir Nihal who is nearing sixty in the beginning of the novel as he had witnessed the fateful day of the fall of Delhi, 14th September, 1857, as a ten-year old boy. Still he is so healthy and strong that he can pick up a running snake from the gutter of the house with a swift movement of his hand and he can break its spinal cord by hitting it on the floor of the house with a powerful jerk of his hand.

But, later on, we find his health going to dogs. He gets a paralysis attack and is unable even to talk. Then, three days later, his power of speech is restored to a great extant but not so the physical or bodily power. Hakim Ajmal Khan comes to Mir Nihal twice or thrice a week and brings costly medicines from his home for him. Still his condition is not improved. Mir Nihal's nice friend, Kambal Shah, advises "Pelican oil" for massaging on the body of Mir Nihal. A pelican is arranged from somewhere. It is slaughtered and the oil is prepared under the supervision of Kambal Shah himself. Later on, the famous wrestler of Delhi, Shammoo, is called daily for massaging but with no improvement at all. At last, Mir Nihal becomes totally bed-ridden. He lies drown and goes on remembering his past. Then his son Habibuddin falls sick and dies. This tragedy casts a terrible effect on Mir Nihal and he becomes almost unable now even to remember his past. He is in a living death, so to speak. The same is the case of the Indian Muslim civilization and culture that faces a living death.

When Mir Nihal is healthy and jovial in the beginning, he looks after his hobby: pigeon flying. He also earns more money because he also has to arrange for his beloved keep, Babban Jan. He also looks after the family name and honour because they are Sayyeds and Bilqeece is a Mughal. But when the conditions deteriorate, Mir Nihal loses his beloved keep, a very great extant. Mir Nihal leaves his hobby and asks Nazir to sell out all his pigeons. Mir Nihal leaves to work for extra income. He leaves to care for family honour and self-respect etc. and gives his consent to the marriage of Asghar with Bilqeece. The world has stopped caring for him: let him stop caring for the world! So we find out that Mir Nihal has been used as a top-priority symbol to portray the deterioration of the customs, traditions, ways and means of which he has been the proud representative.

We can find this deterioration in other characters as well, symbolically enough. Begum Nihal becomes blind slowly and steadily. Begum Jamal leaves her classical residence at Mir Nihal's. Shams loses his wife. Hafizji does not get "pulao" on the very first uttering. Asghar stops loving Bilqueece and starts to find other women for his love.

This does not happen to the world of human beings alone. Even the buildings etc. are affected by time. The gutters of the city which were deep down are dug up and laid on a shallow level. The city walls are demolished. So the stink and sand attack on the city dwellers. The Jamia Masjid whose floor has been coloured redder by Muslim sacrifices on 14th September, 1857, wears a cheap garland to welcome the procession of King George V on the Coronation Day. Even the date-palm tree standing in the middle of the courtyard of Mir Nihal's home throws away its leaves and becomes yellow and seared (dry as a bone).

All these things have been aptly and appropriately used by the writer to show us, symbolically, the dwindling and dying Indian Muslim Civilization and Culture. The novel dealt with the twilight of cultural exhaustion, the twilight of social preferentialism and the twilight of economic backwardness. The city which has for so long enjoyed the 'dawn' – the embellished position of prosperity – cultural richness, economic strength, religious freedom, and above all political supremacy has now been expropriated with all its possessions.

So we can justly claim that although there could be many other names or titles of the novel under discussion, but the most appropriate and the best title for the same could only be "Twilight in Delhi". We can wind up the discussion with a verse from Bahadur Shah Zafar:

Delhi was once a Paradise
And great were the joys that used to be here,
But they have ravished this bride of peace,
And now remain only ruins and care.

Muslim Community as depicted in "Twilight in Delhi"

Ahmed Ali belongs to the post-world war II Indian writer in English. His novel "Twilight in Delhi" is a study of the middle class Muslim society of India in the pre-independence days. Twilight in Delhi is a novel where social history has been believably acknowledged. It is set in a society whose religious, cultural and social ambiance was changing and disintegrating under the impact of the British rule. This society had a history of hundreds of civilized years behind it.

Social values of the culture and society: - Ahmed Ali shows the movement of social forces, memories of the disaster caused by the colonial regime and its strong impact on the thinking and behaviour of the middle class society. The most glaring aspect of Ahmed Ali's style is the pessimistic tone built-up right from the outset of the novel and maintained throughout.

Ahmed Ali's protagonist – the sixty year old, sturdily-built, and typically feudal, manager of a shop of the lace-dealers- Mir Nihal, and his household personify the crumbling feudal society that the novel uncovers. Mir Nihal is the head of his middle-class Muslim household living in the area near Lal Kuan. His is a fairly large family with two daughters, four sons and a typical middle-class Muslim wife in her fifties called Begum Nihal. Mir Nihal is a hen-pecked head of the family. He owns some property also, which keeps the household running quite soundly. And the other monthly income which Mir Nihal makes from his services as a manager of the lace-dealer's shop, he spends on his hobbies. He is a free-lancing old man spending much of time and earnings in kite and pigeon-flying Mir Nihal is an aristocrat in his habits – typical feudal gentleman. Besides pigeon-flying he was very fond of collecting old China-ware and also devoted some of his time to alchemy and medicine. Every morning and evening he would be seen flying pigeons-feeding them, or beating the roof with his shoes to drive the pigeons away from home.

Social relations: - Once Mir Nihal was busy at the pigeons' loft, giving water to and tying feathers of the newly bought pigeons, Gafoor, his servant, comes running to inform that Babbajan is critically ill. Mir Nihal immediately leaves for Babajan, forgetting altogether even to close the loft door.

With the demise of Babbanjan, a very different phase in the life of Mir Nihal began. The death of this mistress being a mournful occasion many unfortunate incidents occur as a result of the utter disillusionment and melancholy that descended upon Mir Nihal following the tragedy. He forgets to close the door of the loft and becomes almost mad to find that wild cats had had a nice feast there - almost to the extent of society. As it was impossible to overcome this second shock, he decides in anger to do away with the hobby itself. He plans to sell the remaining pigeons on the same day.

He found himself weak and broken. The piling up of grief made hm pessimistic. He then decided to give up his jot itself for where was the income to be spent now, as it is his sons were asking him not to do the job – and – what was there now to protect his demeanour or position – he could as well lead a life of dependence on his children. Remarks the novelist: **"Now she was dead, and he did not care what mattered if he was dependent on his sons or anybody else he decided to give up his work."** These incidents evoke in him a consciousness of his own impending end. He begins to think about death.

It was after these incidents that Mir Nihal decides to give his consent for the son Asghar's alliance with Mirza Shahbaz Baig'sdaughter.And he said to himself: "Why withhold consent? It mattered little whether Asghar married a low-born or a girl with blue blood in her veins. He would not be in it anyway. If Asghar refused to see his point of view he could go his own way and ruin himself. He did not care, Life had not treated him well, and if a son was also lost it must be borne.'

Then in idleness his old hobbies of medicine and alchemy revived. He took out his notes and began to study about herbs and plants. A new circle of friends began to form. Hakims and Fakirs come to him to sit for hours comparing notes and relating anecdotes. Besides, he thought, the atmosphere of alchemy and medicine was " a world which was still his own where no one could disturb him or order him about.' Such was the old man's hatred for being ordered about and being imposed upon.

Social Values: - Begum Nihal, a woman in her early fifties, was a dutiful wife of the easy-going husband. She reprimanded him for his careless ways. She often had to remind him that their children Mehro and Asghar – were coming age and that he should look for a proper alliance for them. Begum Nihal is the only person in the entire household who performs the religious rites with a mechanical regularity. The others only did it occasionally. In the morning, after the dawn prayers, she would sit and recite the holy Quran aloud in a rhythmic tone –rhythmically moving back and forth. She is the symbol of the self-less and calm middle-class Muslim Woman of the early twentieth century.

The culture of Delhi: - All of Mir Nihal's children were married and settled. Whether they were happy or not was not his worry now. He himself was on the way

This he had begun to understand. And he thought it to be certain. Similarly the beloved of the heart of the Indians, the city of Delhi, has also got dismembered, giving birth to a New Delhi. Though the inhabitants of Delhi had become disillusioned the fortune of the foreign government had begun to assert itself poignantly. In the city of Delhi many changes were being proposed. New people meant new customs and traditions. The old culture would, therefore be in a danger of annihilation. The language on which Delhi had once prided itself would become adulterated and impure. The people of Delhi were most unwilling to let this happen.

Ahmed Ali's hero, Mir Nihal's personification of the society at the moment when the social fabric was being altered, becomes clearly discernible. A proud and stable civilization was destroyed by the encroachment of an outside culture, just as a happy family was dismembered by the modernistic trends. The traditional society, hitherto protected by the common force of social and religious values, breaks and collapses with the arrival of the white man and his ideology. Similarly the erosion of traditional values in the family of Mir Nihal is seen as a result of the effects of the new civilization. Mir Nihal tells Asghar: **"You are again wearing those dirty English boots; I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. Throw them away."**

The foreign occupation of India seems to have made some of the citizens withdraw into a world of their own. Though there are no direct references in Ahmed Ali's novel to the ravages wrought by the rule of the white man, the novel deals with it very subtly. Mir Nihal the protagonist adopts a leave-me-alone attitude. When the Home-Rule movement sweeps across India he is almost untouched. Ahmed Ali says: **"His world had fallen. Let others build their own."**

Ahmed Ali describes the popular sport of Pigeon flying. And this is contrasted with the family scenes within the old house. The family tale which reaches its climax with the marriage of Asghar and Bilqueece is set against the aerial background of kite flying and pigeon flying. As the flying of pigeons and kites fade into the background the family becomes the central metaphor. Then the novelist subjects the husband and wife to the inevitable blows of fate. Asghar's happy life is covered with gloom with the death of his wife. The novelist strikes a fatalistic note here. "who can meddle in the affairs of God?"

Ahmed Ali begins his novel with a description of the night enveloping the city like a blanket, and ends it by showing Mir Nihal the head of the family, in a state of coma when the sun is about to set. On another level a segment of Indian history comes to an end.

Political Conditions depicted in 'Twilight in Delhi'

Ahmed Ali is known as the pioneer of English fiction and poetry among the Muslims of India. His literary career began during British rule over India and his significance as a writer is both historical and social. He moved from Urdu, his mother tongue and the literary language of Indian Muslims, to English. He is the first to get hold of modernity, social-realism and then symbolism from Western origin among Indian Muslim writers. His revocation is chiefly for his historical significance. 'Twilight in Delhi' is one of his finest

literary achievements in which he depicts the prevailing political conditions of pre-independence Delhi.

Description of Delhi in 'Twilight in Delhi': - The city of Delhi was once the vice-like grip of art, culture, architecture and learning. Its throne was adorned by the kings and monarchs who patronized learning and encouraged fine arts. Many victorious wars were fought on its battlefields. It has seen their glory as well as their disaster. They were those who beautified the city by erecting great monuments and creating magnificent buildings. And whose only work was to invade the city, raid its fortresses, destroy the monuments and loot the wealth. And the city of Delhi stands a witness to all these happenings like a mute spectator. It has no reaction to show against the damage done to its culture and civilization.

The novelist speaks pessimistically: **"Gone are the poets now and gone is its culture".** Only the coils of the rope, when the rope itself has been burnt, remain to remind us of the past splendour. Delhi stands for both life and death. It has seen how glory descended upon it with the rise to power of the Guptas, the Mauryas, the Kushans, the Pandabas, the Khiljis, the Sayyids and the Lodhis, and the great Moghuls. And it had also seen the dethroning of the poet-king Bahadur Shah – the last of that great line of rulers, at the hands of the foreigners who came into the country as mere traders but gradually dug their feet deep into the soil of statecraft. With their invasion a kind of silence and apathy, as of death, descended upon the city. Its glory began to wither away. The city of Delhi is the definitive symbol of loss and Muslim sense of nostalgia.

The city, at least six or seven times in history, has been plundered and destroyed. Ali captures the image of Delhi as:

"But the city of Delhi, built hundreds of years ago, fought for, died for, coveted and desired, built, destroyed and rebuilt, for five and six and seven times, mourned and sung, raped and conquered, yet whole and alive, lies indifferent in the arms of sleep. It was the city of kings and monarchs, of poets and story tellers, courtiers and nobles. But no king lives there today, and the poets are feeling the lack of patronage; and the old inhabitants, though still alive, have lost their pride and grandeur under a foreign yoke." (Ali 1983: 1-2)

Depiction of political orientation among middle-class Muslim families in Delhi:- The novel depicted the life of the first two decades of the twentieth century middle – class Muslim family in Delhi. The novel describes that the city of Delhi that was under the control of British ruling over it and moreover described the conditions prevailing during the period. In the second edition of the novel, Ahmed Ali articulated his intention:

My purpose was to depict a phase of our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, now dead and gone already right before our eyes. Seldom is one allowed See a pageant of History whirl past and partake in it too. (Twilight in Delhi Vii)

In 1918, nature was rebellious and angry with people of India. Thousands were killed in the war, with the German guns. There was inhumanity and could find Delh

city of the dead. People of Delhi were very particular of the traditions of the past. They made songs and sang them, and the leaflets containing them were sold for a piece each.

How deadly this fever is,
Everyone is dying of it.
Men become lame with it
And go out in dolis
The hospitals are gay and bright,
But sorry is men's plight.

The reader could measure the mind of the protagonists, Mir Nihal's memories of the ferocious British 1857 revolt. When the family's wedding ceremony coincide with coronation of George V took place. Mir Nihal's view point, the celebration of a British monarch in Delhi turned the city "which was once the greatest in Hindustan." Into "an exhibition ground."

Here it was in this very Delhi, Mir Nihal thought, that Kings once rode past. Indian Kings his kings, kings who have left a great and glorious name behind. But the Farangis came from across the seven seas, and gradually established their rule. By egging on Indian chiefs to fight each other and by giving them cecret and open aid they won concessions for themselves; and established their' empire'

Mir Nihal believes the city of Delhi once ruled by Muslim kings with glorious name became dead and decay with the intervention of Farangis. The crowd reached at the Fort in Delhi to see the King, it only happened during the Mughal Kings. People of Delhi could not able to distinguish the king and the officials because the English looked alike with their white faces and similar military uniforms.

The novel presented at a time the political activity and the religious activity. It also presented in detail the celebration of the British and their servants who passed by the main mosque, Jama Masjid centre and it is symbol of the anti-colonialist resistance:

The procession passed by the Jama Masjid whose façade (frontage) had been vulgarly decorated with a garland of golden writing containing slavish greetings from the Indian Mussalmans to the English king, displaying the treachery of the Priestly class to their people and Islam. (pg.150)

There is a celebration of George V in Twilight in Delhi but in his third novel, "Of Rats and Diplomats," there is a criticism, of British ruler as he felt useless to present their celebrations: "**that the British celebrating the death of an Edwardian king by holding a grand durbar on the ashes of Mughal pride in ravished Delhi."** It has described the intention of British who likes to destroy Jama Masjid, there is anti-British sentiments with Islam.

The conflict between British and Muslim as shown in 'Twilight in Delhi':- The conflict between British and Muslim continue till Gandhi's non-cooperation movement

started. While attending the movement's meeting, they heard the death of Muslim youth who had been killed and then Habibuddin, Mir Nihal's favourite son, declares,

"the English frankly say that they fear no one but Muslims in India and that if they crush the Mussalmans they shall rule with a care- free heart."(262)

William Howard Russell wrote in the Times in early 1858:

The Mohammadan element in India is that which causes us most trouble and provokes the largest share of our hostility. Our antagonism to the followers of Mohammed is far stronger than that we bear to the worshippers of Shiva and Vishu. They are unquestionably more dangerous to our rule. If we could eradicate the traditions and destroy the temples of Mohammad by one vigorous effort, it could indeed be well for the Christian faith and for the British rule.

There was no peace for the soul of man. Azaans were called and prayers were done to stop the evil. But it was of no use. Death passed through towns and cities. People of Delhi became conscious and wished to change the conditions of India. As the country was under the British Raaj so Home Rule Movement began. Although, Mir Nihal was not affected as he had his own aspirations which he neither understood nor sympathized with. However, his grandson Nasim (Habibuddin's son) recited the poem or political song written after the Balkan war had sentiments of Mussalmans

The wish for glory and martyrdom
Has begun to sway our hearts again
We shall try his skill and see
What strength is in the enemy's hand
Let the time come we will show
What courage there is in us still
Why should we tell you nows what we
Have in our hearts? The power of will
But, traveler on the road of love,
Tire and weary not in the way.
The pleasure of tramping the desert is
Greater the father is the goal away. (pg263)

Mir Nihal's painful thoughts were in his mind. When he tried to close his eyes he could see the Red Fort that was built by Shahjahan. Humayun's tomb or a Qutub Minar proved to be mighty Hindustan in those days. He remembered with blood in his eyes when he was ten years of age, the English insisted to demolish Mosque into a church during 1857. On 14th September 1857 when thousands of Mussalmans gathered to do prayers, Thomas Metcalf with his army destroyed the Jama Masjid. The Muslims when came to know of this wanted to attack on Metcalf, but hey had no guns with them they had only swords. They were informed that if they want to save their lives they should go to the southern gate and if they want to prove their mettle should reach to the northern gate of the mosque. There was not one soul who went to southern gate of the mosque. Hundreds fell down dead on the steps of the mosque.

Finally, the Muslims dominated during the revolt of 1857, and so the British called it **"a Mohammadan rebellion"** and **"a handiwork of the Muslims"**. Musilms challenged them and made as mortal enemy from the entire population of India. Many thousands of people died and were massacred and some thousands made guilty for their deeds and sent to death. After 1857 the heavy hand of the British fell more on the Muslims than on the Hindus. They considered the Muslims more aggressive and militant than the Hindus, possessing memories of recent rule in India and therefore more dangerous.

A Study of the City in "Twilight in Delhi"

Ahmed Ali a prolific Pakistani writer sets his masterpiece, Twilight in Delhi, in late 19th century. He wants to portray a picture of Delhi in its true perspective. He said:

"my purpose was to depict a phase of our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, now dead and gone already right before our eyes."

Ahmed Ali's representation of the middle class Muslim family of Mir Nihal and the depiction of Delhi is really a wonderful task. He adequately shows the decay of the whole culture on the whole this novel shows the element of universality because it infuses many layers of meaning in it, like Delhi as an embodiment of the whole culture, and Mir Nihal as true Delhi citizen or the representative of the Indian Muslim class novelist doesn't want to show a complete picture of Muslim society in Delhi but also show the pragmatic understanding of life, religious identities, and the harsh realities of life.

Seven Delhis have fallen: and the eighth is going way of its predecessors, yet to be built and demolished again life, like the phoenix must collect spices from its nest and set fire to it, and arise resurrected out of the flames, by using the highly suggestive image of phoenix as death in life, and also as, life in death, the novelist makes us recognise the cyclic phenomenon, birth-growth decay-resurrection, that governs the lives of men and cities. At the same time, he suggest to us behind the man-infected havoc against another man , there is a greater and omnipotent force.… great are the ravages of time , and no one can do anything against its indomitable might. Kings die and dynasties fall. Centuries and aeons pass. But never a smile lights up inscrutable face of time,(text). Most of the time plot revolves around the protagonist and reveal the past condition of Delhi from 1857 to 1911. When Mir Nihal saw the coronation ceremony he remembered:

"as ten-year old boy the mutiny of 1857 when their relations were killed by the British soldiers ruthlessly and their houses were demolished and destroyed, property looted, residents turned out and their emperor Bahadur Shah cruelly dethroned. All this he could never forget and consequently, he had been smouldering with rage in his soul."

The deep study of the novel delineates that the historical study and individual study went side by side. Further we can say it shows the life by time and life by values. Throughout the whole novel we heard the uneven life of Mir Nihal and Delhi.

which was built by Shah Jahan. The novel is not a mere sad commentary on the plummeting of Mir Nihal and the city, as it also records the inevitable disillusionment of human beings. The major crack in the life of Mir Nihal is the proposal of his son with Bilqueece. It is totally difficult for a man who brought up in the four walls of class and blood, to change his entire values. In the beginning, Begum Nihal also reluctant to give her consent to marry a low- born but son's threat of committing suicide bowed down her but Mir Nihal vehemently protests to her: **"You don't want to bring a low born into the family"**

But neither Mir Nihal nor begum Nihal can change the sweeping winds of change. Mir Nihal's life can be considered as the account of a disillusioned man. His attempts to build a small personal world within the world, which in a way is also everyone, desperate attempt to live, life is as per one's dreams in the face of the apathy of ate. The splendid past and the aristocratic habits die hard in Mir Nihal, it seems that he wants to live in his own private world; his belief on his supremacy sustains himself, to keep going.

Mir Nihal's pigeon flying hobby testifies to his determined will to hold on living his life despite the vagaries of time. His zealous attempts to safeguard his hobby further substantiates this. His attempts to excel in the game of pigeon calling props up his sagging ego.

Babban Jan is another character who was not his wife but a person who gives him solace: **"His wife was there no doubt, and so were the children. But the world they lived in was a domestic world. Here at Babban Jan's he had built a quiet corner for himself where he could always retire and forget his sorrows in its secluded peace"**

The hobby of pigeons flying and Babban Jan both have great meaning in the life of Mir Nihal his unsatisfied sexual appetite often create disturbance in his marital life. Sometimes we have found Mir Nihal with the maid servant Dilchain. His unfullfillment and emptiness is the recurring motif of this novel. The beating of the cat shows his helplessness and anger towards fate. **"the cat gave a piercing how and instinctively rushed to the door of a staircase …he beat her until he was tired and the cat looked dead …but something within him died; and he did not go to the shop that day."**

After these incidents he gave up his normal life and hope for death. Yet death was alive and would come to him too and free him from misery and care. His agony is also around when he saw the coronation of the king George v. his deep rooted association with Delhi makes him grieve over the fate of Delhi.

"there it was that the Hindu kings had built the early Delhi's, Hasthinapur or Delhi, and still in Mahroli stands the iron pillar as a memory of Asoka and other of the day of India's golden age; and dynasties greater than history has ever known today it was this very Delhi which was being deposited by a western race who had no sympathy with India or her sons…

Asghar seemed revolutionary because he led life in his own modern English style. In the relay race of life, Asghar is too busy to take note of the fate of a way side player. The ever enchanting charms of life cast their spell on Asghar too.

Asgher seemed on seventh heaven when he realized that his dream of marrying Bilqeece came true, without prior apprehension about her sexual coldness. By the time he aligns himself from her and the feelings of the others. **"yet he was not so much in love with her as with his own self, his own dreams and illusions which he had created in his mind".**

Asghar also failed to sympathise with the dancing girl Mushtari Bai with whom he dallied for some time. Mushtari Bai bemoans her fate and said: "**I am like a caravan-serai where people come, rest their tried bodies for a while and depart… my life is a desert in which no oases exist."** The whole episode shows the disillusionment and decay of the novel and its character.

After marriage there is a gulf of disillusionment increased between Asghar and Bilqueece. Asghar become father of Jahan Ara and she is like a change in his knife Asghar had become indifferent his dreams had come to an end and he did not find his wife as charming as he had done over a year ago. Both husband and wife are in agony but Bilqueece's agony ended when she died as a tube regular. She feels that world is falling to pieces all around her and in the midst of the debris she stood without a friend or sympathises all alone.

Bilqueece's death made him sad he feel that he is responsible for her death; so Jahan Ara not able fill the blank but Asghar has fallen for the charms of Zohra who knew well what sex is and how to attract men. So Asghar wanted to marry her but his desire remained unfulfilled. It seemed that he is like his father who spends his life in a living death condition.

The seventh Delhi is swiftly declining and Mir Nihal a well built and tall man with noble and majestic face, dwindled into the status of a complete wreck. He is totally defected and never able to bring the peace of mind. He can't able maintain the glories of Delhi.

He is a spectator who sees with his own eyes the decline of Delhi. He lays on his bed more dead than alive, too broken to think even of the past. His world had fallen to pieces all around him smothered by indifference and death. So the whole novel Twilight in Delhi shows the two characters first the city Delhi and second Mir Nihal both seemed in decay throughout the whole Novel.

Gender Issues in Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi

Women consist half of the species. They are the makers of family, society, and nation. Since the ages, women have been relegated to the periphery for being inferior to men. The fetters of the society and culture have led women to imprison themselves in the houses and dream only about their husband, children and family.

Gender issues are very obvious in Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi. It is a beautifully written novel in English. Primarily the novel deals with the downfall of Delhi culture due to the arrival of British in the beginning of the twentieth century and simultaneously it gives us a glimpse of Indo-Muslim family life. The novel becomes the storehouse of various images drawn from Delhi and its culture. Not only the pigeon flying and kite flying have been projected as the major part of Indian culture but the subordinated women's life also becomes its chief issue.

This novel covers the period of nine years i.e. from 1910 to 1919. It is set in pre independent Delhi and remarkably deals with the plight of women during that era. The society projected in the novel is male dominated and it brings out the fact that how the feudal lord of the family restrains a large section of the society from actively participating in the works outside the household affairs. Ali makes his novel a mirror of society and tells through the extended family of Mir Nihal that how the Indo Muslim family were divided into two parts: the one called mardana the men's part of the house and another called zenana the women's part of the house. Women observed purdah from the outsiders as well as the male members of the house. This purdah system was actually started to protect women from the eyes of the strangers.

Women were not allowed to take any important decision in the family as in the case of Begam Nihal who after confronting the secret love of her son Asghar could not think to give her consent without her husband's approval. Nevertheless, finding her son at the door of death and due to the fear of his committing suicide she stealthily settles Asghar and Bilqueece's marriage. She realizes her rights in the case of marriage and says, **"For though women hold a subordinate position in Indian life yet in certain matters they can take the law in their hands, and marriage is one of them"**. This fact reveals that women had the rights but they never realized this out of their modesty.

Mir Nihal, one of the leading characters in the novel, enjoys an extra marital love affair with a courtesan named Babban Jan and keeps telling a lie to his wife. These visits to the courtesans were considered royal in the Mughal period. Begam Nihal who used to wait for her husband's arrival in the night was entirely unaware of this dark side of her husband's character. Not only this but after her mistress' death he gradually washes his hands away from all the duties. Mir Nihal did not have only Babban Jan in his life but in the very early years of his married life, he had a son from his maid Dilchain who died later on, and due to which his wife went mad.

On the other hand, Mir Nihal's son Asghar also visits Mushtari Bai, another famous courtesan and starts having visions of her in the night. The female beauty of Mushtari Bai charms Asghar. But as men, due to their tendency are fickle minded in case of women and keep vacillating from one to another, Asghar also soon loses his interest in Mushtari Bai and turns to Bilqueece, and marries her against his father's wishes.

Indian scenario is such that girls, since their childhood, are taught to be humble and docile as they have to be sent to their husband's house sooner or later. As soon as the proposal comes for Mehro's marriage, she starts thinking about her ultimate destiny. The romantic and fantastic images that revolve in her mind take her into another world and she is preoccupied with an idealistic picture of her husband. She thinks:

Mehro lies on her bed and looks up at the stars,…She thinks of a man far away whose proposal has come for her hand. What can he be like? She wonders. She has never seen him…Meraj –that is his name --… And she associates him with the prince in the story with whom the princess was in love.

Not only Mehro dreamt of her future life partner but she was thrilled at his thought also. She was too young to understand the complexity of married life. Ahmed Ali gives us a peep inside her heart:

She, of course, liked it in her heart of hearts;…that not only disturbed her emotional balance, but also exposed her inhibitions which grow in the repressed lives of the Indian women like cobwebs and mushrooms. To conceal her consciousness of sex, she flew into a temper, without, of course, realizing its unconscious and hidden cause.

Even though it was the time of freedom struggle and women were also breaking the barriers and coming out of their houses, but still the common people kept their daughters and women in purdah and they were always brought and sent in dolis.

Ahmed Ali has presented the conventional women caught in their household affairs. Patriarchy (male dominated system) always considers women as irrational, emotional, and sentimental fools and men have this pre-conceived notion that women are good for nothing. They are simply the gossipmongers and only know to kill their time by chatting endlessly. Ali does not remain away from this belief and throughout the novel; he has depicted these details at length:

Everyday Begam Jamal and AnjumZamani, her sister in law, came down and peeling potatoes or some other vegetable for dinner, or just sitting idle, cutting areca nut into small bits which they collected in circular purses, they let their tongues loose, and talked and talked, of marriage and death, of this and that, but mostly of people and family.

Ali is deft at portraying men as paragon and hides their inadequacies. Through the character of SaeedHasan he tells what to be expected from women and what a man wants in his wife:

A wife should be of moderate stature, neither short nor very tall nor too fat. She could not be short because then she would give birth to many children. She should not be very tall as she would bend down soon after the birth of one child. She would not be too fat for then she will never have a child at all. That is why a man must give preference to one who combines all qualities harmoniously and proportionately.

Not only the women belonging to the refined, honourable families are our issue in the novel but the courtesans like Babban Jan and Mushtari Bai have their own miserable life. They neither gain sympathy from the readers in the novel nor pitied by the people in society. They are only looked at with hatred and contempt. For them it is only their physical beauty, which they use to get money to survive. They are conscious of this fact

that in their old age they will be left alone to suffer as Mushtari Bai says, "**But when old age knocks at the door, beauty of the body dies: only virtue is beauty which I do not possess".** The cursed fate of Mushtari Bai becomes more heart rending when she very philosophically says,"**I am that candle which burns its own self, shedding tears of blood, and blackens the walls of the niche with its smoke"**. This is very ironical that these neglected women of the society who sang and danced only for the Nawabs and the upper classes to entertain them, they themselves remained ruined and neglected throughout their life.

The central attraction of the novel is the passionate love of Asghar for his wife Bilqueece. Bilqueece's beauty forces Asghar to marry her against his father's desire. However, the problem arises when after marriage Asghar finds Bilqueece not as sensuous and passionate as he himself was and thus his dream shattered. Bilqueece worshiped him like her God but Asghar could not pacify himself with the cold attitude of Bilqueece and did not pay any regard to her. On the very first night of their wedding, Asghar finds himself in chaos when he expects the romantic talks and gestures of Bilqueece and gets nothing, not even the response to his own advances. This lack of warmth in his beloved resulted in Asghar's indifference towards her. He started keeping himself away from all the duties of a husband, often shouted at Bilqueece, and busied himself in official works.

Surprisingly enough Asghar, who has once left Mushtari Bai for Bilqueece, again moves towards his mistress. The reason for the detachment of Asghar from Bilqueece was not only her coldness but also the birth of a girl child whereas Asghar expected a son. This negligence of Asghar led Bilqueece suffer in her heart and ultimately forced her to die. Asghar now left with his only daughter was grief stricken, as he could do nothing to keep his daughter happy. Nothing could bring him solace and comfort. However, destiny has its own role to play and the life has to go on, believing in the same dictum soon after the death of his wife Asghar started planning for his second marriage with no one else but his dead wife's younger sister Zohra. Man does not dare to accept his infidelity; therefore, Asghar gives the excuse of his young daughter Jahan Ara that only for her sake he was getting married. Nevertheless, Zohra's mother, after seeing her first daughter's condition, did not approve the match and rejected the proposal.

The novel Twilight in Delhi forces the readers to look deep into the realities. However, the novel was written in mid twentieth century but still Muslim women's condition is not praiseworthy. They still go through the same agonies and sufferings. A conventional Muslim family still does not allow a girl child so easily to educate and purdah system is so deep rooted in their custom that to break this system is a sin for them.

Twilight in Delhi : "Indianness' of the novel,

Ahmed Ali tries to infuse his work with indigenous concerns by deploying a particular theme, style, imagery and setting. His style is realism. Ahmed Ali says:

"Our literature so far has been of an individualist type, sentimental, unrealistic, irrational, mystical. Conditions demand an uncompromising realism, looking the

problems in the face, a literature brutal even in its ruggedness without embellishments and unnecessary insistence on form and technique".

In accordance with these views, everything is treated to realistic detail. Describing the by lanes of Delhi, the author comments "**Dogs go about sniffing the gutters in search of offal; and cats slink out of narrow by lanes, from under the planks jutting out of shops, and lick the earthen cups out of which men had drunk milk and thrown away".** Though the novel gives a sweeping view of members of different social strata and accordingly has a huge number of characters with markedly different personalities, it gives us a glimpse of the everyday doings and concerns of the Nihals. Then there is the realistic depiction of the elaborate rituals involved in marriage ceremonies, funerals and religious festivals of Id, kite flying, pigeon flying and the pervasive belief in superstition.

We are given a close view of the Indian joint family where women are shut up in their zenanas while men are free to keep mistresses. Referring to the realm of the zenana, the author says eloquently, **"The world lived and died, things happened, events took place, but all this did not disturb the equanimity of the zenana, which had its world too where the pale and fragile beauties of the hothouse lived secluded from all outside harm, the storms that blow in the world of men"**. Ahmed Ali gives an apt picture of the Indian woman who is subjected to so many restrictions that **"the idea of love does not take root in the heart".** Bilqueece is such an Indian woman who is '**unromantic'** but a '**perfect housewife'** and the novelist gives a poignant picture of her later passive suffering. He also gives a psychological insight into Mehro's temper whenever her fiancé's name is mentioned. This novel does not portray any female resistance to the patriarchal biases prevalent in the home and the family.

The specifically hot Indian summer with which each part of the novel begins, the beauty and sadness of the Indian spring and rainy season, the date palm and the henna tree which stand in the courtyard as witnesses to the family's joys and sorrows, the song of the domnis and the riot of colours in the marriage ceremonies, the smell of kababs near Jama Masjid – all these make the novel quintessentially Indian.

But the question arises as to whether the novel tries to impute homogeneity to Indian tradition and culture. Mourning the passing away of a great art and culture, the author makes Mir Nihal consider only posts like Mir, Ghalib and Insha as the "great poets of Hindustan". The Mughal Empire and monuments built by Mughals are regarded as the mark of glory and splendour of the city of Delhi, though there is a minor reference to the Kauravas and the Pandavas. By doing this, the author imparts singularity to India's rich and plural cultural heritage. Vinayak Krishna Gokak in his book The Concept of Indian Literature remarks that an integral cultural awareness is an indispensable feature of Indianness. I would not say that the novel here falls short of Indianness but it does infuse homogeneity by glorifying only a portion of the entire Indian heritage and calling it the whole.

Commenting on the themes handled by the older generation of Indo-English novelists, Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay "The Anxiety of Indianness" says that they were predictably pan-Indian, defining Indian concerns as against

Mukherjee does not refer to Ahmed Ali, but his novel, though marked by spatial specify and attempt an exploration of Muslim society, also deals with similar time-worn clichés of east-west confrontation, the clash between tradition and modernity, the disintegration of the Indian joint family, etc. As Mukherjee says, this can be seen as an attempt to construct a national identity, through **"erasure of differences within the border and accentuating the difference with what lies outside"**.

K. Satchidanandan in Indian Literature: Positions and Propositions has pointed out that Indian writers are first and foremost Indian, no matter what language they write in, because of their works' rootedness in their social, historical and cultural contexts. But this basic unity has in no way eroded the fascinating diversity of our literatures. Twilight in Delhi is very different from the other literary texts already done in this course both in theme and form – a pointer to the heterogeneity of Indian literature. But an Indian setting and theme marks it, reflecting Vinayak Krishna Gokak's comment that Indian literature is a thread of continuity against a background of continuous change. In conclusion, it can be pointed out that Indian novels in English and works in Indian languages are, as Mukherjee says, "disparate literary products of a complex plural culture" (168) and they should not be congealed into rigid and opposed positions.

From our situatedness in a time when upper and middle class Indian society has internalized so many Western habits and ways of life, Twilight in Delhi can be seen as looking into a time when the situation was very different, and as trying to articulate a people's helplessness in the face of what colonialism was doing to their culture and to their beloved and once glorious city.

Literary and non-literary purposes in the novel

The novel has two main purposes or good intentions. One is literary or creative or artistic and the other one is essentially non- literary. It does not mean that there can be contradiction in the book. Suppose the writer has a good talent in his writings, then non-creative purpose does no harm to work.

According to Mohammed HasanAskari the actual purpose of Ahmed Ali is to write a guide to Delhi for Englishmen. He called it 'a guide' because the book has been written for Englishmen who are unfamiliar with life in Delhi and that the author wishes to acquaint them in this way. When asked about this point, Ahmed Ali stated that the thought had never entered his mind. Actually, his purpose was to depict life a culture, a mode of living and thought, all of which were passing away. He did this in his own realistic manners, which are considered the detail are essential and part of its method. He noticed that the details are historical and Mir Nihal's generation lost the culture and forgotten them and reached to history.

The non-literary purpose has restriction on the writer- that life of Delhi has to be depicted in English. The problem the author might have faced could be to create a style in English to represent atmosphere and harmony of life in Delhi into a foreign language or English. Ahmed Ali has been most successful in this effort and made English as

subservient to his artistic will. Edwin Muir said that 'one could smell the Jasmine flowers in the book, which in turn means that Ahmed Ali has achieved the impossible.

The masterly artistic techniques could be seen in the novel. Ahmed Ali has done two things with great artistry. On the one hand, he presented the atmosphere of an average Muslim household, and on the other hand, commenced his story. The picture of the family which Ahmed Ali has drawn was ordinary and colourless to look at from this point of view Ahmed Ali's task was the more difficult, for he has created colour from colourlessness.

Ahmed Ali mentioned in his book different individuals, a city, a particular culture, a period of history. His theme is not confined to a few characters and their biographies but to an entire city. It is actually a collective novel whose hero is the city of Delhi. One can raise a point that Muslims were not alone lived in Delhi and the author has given importance to one particular section, as he want to see the reality through his own eyes. The fact is that Ahmed Ali knew Delhi as millions of Muslims whether a class society or a classless one, there is always a section of society, large or small, that occupies a central place and is the source of cultural values. Delhi created a particular set of values. There is a sense of defeat for the period with great courage and honesty. Ahmed Ali could not conceal the fact that he love these dying values and felt sorry for its decay. He has shown sympathy for the culture, and in doing this sympathy shows itself as a personal catharsis, his emphasis in the book is on something larger –life itself brings unmindful of social changes, continues and never dies. Thus Ahmed Ali's attitude did not change from its original progressivism. This definition of progress was not understood or appreciated by many readers, especially member of the All-India Progressive Writer's Association, who were according to Ahmed Ali,' carried away by the panorama of passing things.'

Method of depicting collective life:- In the collective life of a whole society can be presented through the ideas and actions of a group against the background of a revolutionary movement or war. It is most difficult to produce events or extraordinary thing with the art and technique. But Ahmed Ali has done it. That's the author has taken one family and shown its members daily life. All these are considered to be simple and insignificant things such as eating, drinking, sleeping festivals and fairs, marriage birth, and death, naïve love affairs, quarrels and arguments. Hence the works of women novelist and the incidents of the novel are more or less alike. The difference one can find in the arrangement and selection of incidents in the novel are different and considered or believed to have a universal significance. These details also presented the spirit of collective life and the values of collective unity. With the insignificant details we come to know collective life and the soul of society that is its subject. These details are as essential for the artistic purpose of the book as they are for the non-artistic ones.

The other method of depicting collective life, apart from incidents is through characters. Their action lasts only as long as need demand. The action for the character takes place when it is needed and authors of such novel do not allow their characters to continue with their action. In contrast to this, Ali allowed his characters to live a complete life with right. Actually, each character believed and felt significant or important of themselves and we tried to identify them and sometimes feel unaware of the some characters.

E.M. Forster said of Twilight in Delhi: "it is beautifully written and very moving. The detail was almost all of it new to me, and fascinating. It is a sort of poetical chronicle. At the end one has a poignant feeling that poetry and daily life have got parted and will never come together again."

Ahmed Ali presented the character of Asghar who falls in love three times. First, he flirts courtesan out of a desire. The courtesan falls in love with him, but he turns her down. Then he loves Bilqueece, after a struggle to marry her, he makes his love successful. As there is a saying "familiarity breeds contempt," he becomes indifferent to her when she becomes ill. After Bilqueeces' death, Asghar falls in love with her younger sister, but unfortunately he cannot marry her. Thus, this love remains unsuccessful. Ahmed Ali thus depicted the emotional ups and downs of an ordinary man's life.

Through the character of Mir Nihal Delhi's culture has been produced life that has neither depth nor expanse, there is no balance and uniformity, who is culturally a mixture and in fact whose finest emotions are lacking beauty and dignity the qualities that arouse from the traditions of the harmonious culture. But if once a balance achieves stability, it becomes static and turns to death. Therefore, the character of Mir Nihal ends in the novel. Baseless and lack of balance signifies a compromise with life. But Asghar's defeat does not end there – he has not met his final defeat. He still likes to love again. There is a symbolic significance of the date palm tree, there is a sadness that deepens as the plot develops with the gradual decay of the spring of life into autumn one can find man's helplessness in their life. The author has beautifully described the pain of the transience of life and doubts about the purpose of life itself.

The remarkable character of the book is Mir Nihal. Something unique one can find in the character of Mir Nihal. The nature is passive in him. He has two interests in life, his pigeons and his mistress, Babanjan. When his courtesan or Babanjan dies, he gives up flying pigeons and also his job and take interest in alchemy and mysticism. His intention is to escape the changes that are taking place in life and to withdraw from the world formerly. Mir Nihal wished to cry over the ups and downs of life, but in the end he does not even have the desire to do that. Asghar comes to him wearing English clothes, but Mir Nihal does not even object. His body becomes paralyzed. He has no hoe to survive. Already his young daughter-in-law and son have died. Mir Nihal dies on his bed and watches with open eyes and cannot heave a sigh. Asghar, may forget his sorrows, but Mir Nihal cannot forget. All his physical and mental strengths have decreased, but his memory is alive. The grief of the minor characters have become the grief of Mir Nihal.

One can find at the end of the book, the intensity becomes so strong that, life of Nihal grieve for unfulfilment, haplessness, transience and seems to cast basic doubts on its own reality. Ahmed Ali's great achievement is the creation of the character Mir Nihal. One cannot separate this character from the body of the book, because the whole book contains life in him. The description of Mir Nihal's illness is a masterpiece in itself. We cannot compare either with Urdu novels or with western fiction.

Ahmed Ali is most sympathetic to his characters. Sometimes the comic elements in Ahmed Ali produce an effect of pity example. After Pelican being procured with much difficulty, it is killed and everybody comes to watch it not only the children l

old maidservant Dilchain. One can judge the writers when they produce in their work death and illness during such situations, the writers would either become emotional or ineffective. But Ahmed Ali managed to be good. He gave the description of death in detail that of Bilqueece and then of Habibuddin with subtlety. After World war-I, Ahmed Ali gave details of plague which was marvellous. Ahmed Ali created the horrific atmosphere of universal death and all-round dishonesty.

After reading his work one can say that he has used masterly artistic techniques. Ahmed Ali has done two things with great artistry. One the one hand, he presented the atmosphere of an average Muslim household, and on the other hand, commenced his story. The picture of the family which Ahmed Ali has drawn was ordinary and colourless to look at from this point of view Ahmed Ali's task was the more difficult, for he has created colour from colourlessness.

Ahmed Ali has given individual life to each- that is nature, the days, and nights of Delhi, the sunsets and dawns, the summer, the rainy season and the changing shades the sky, the breezes , the hot wind, the dust storms and sunshine have a separate existence in themselves in the novel. He described the lanes of the city, the gutters, dogs and cats, the flying pigeons, hawks and paper kites – all appear often in the novel. With these changing seasons, with the moods off nature and all the rest, Ali has given the city an eternal and living identify and name. He described the summer season of Delhi with great artistry. The seasons have a symbolic value, and the atmosphere of the whole novel is imbued with them, the whole story take s place in this atmosphere. In the Urdu novel there can be sensitive appreciation of nature. Hence, we can compare the writing of Ali with that of Urdu writer. Mohammed HasanAskari says:

"I cannot recall any novel or short story in Urdu where nature has thus come to life, or in which nature has played such a role in making the novel so meaningful."

Another factor in this novel is a sense of unity and intensity: the awareness of the flight of time. A thought of time is so intense in Ali that his imagination acquires momentum and becomes the source of his artistic vitality. Ali has produced a few emotional sentences, but the feelings are not sentimental and sound. Through which one could form an idea of Ali from the character of Mir Nihal. One cannot or may not find Urdu authors equal to him. There is an attachment and love for whole civilization and so the sense of time does not lead to more sadness or passions in him, but carries within it tragi c elements.

The novel does not remain the story of Delhi alone, but is simultaneously the story of the life of mankind. The centre of our tragic sense is not Delhi alone, but life itself. After reading a book, one can ask fundamental and knotty questions about life and the human condition. Why beauty does come to an end? Why does life rush involuntarily towards death? If death is the final goal of all things, why was life created in the first place. The difficulty in finding answers to these questions is clear from the fact that at the close of the book nature in all its wonder and awe overshadows man and engulfs him within itself.

This is the cumulative impress of the book. Yet there is another aspect which remains Mir Nihal becomes paralysed and asks his grandson to struggle for freedom when he reaches to the age. Mir Nihal s bones must be buried and decay, but his grandson must dream the dream to a new life, a new harmony, a new civilization and the way of life. Mirza the milk seller sacrificed his son in the path of independence. Hundreds of such brave heroes must still be alive. From the twilight in Delhi arose the dawn of Pakistan. Until Ahmed Ali writes the second part of the novel, his book remains incomplete.

Style in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali

Twilight in Delhi provides a real and accurate portrait of the static and decaying tradition of culture of Delhi while the British arranged the coronation Durbar of 1911 and draw up plans for new imperial city, New Delhi. The novel has planned to reveal interconnecting levels and has been praised for its lucid style, its use of symbolism and the manner in which it merges the life of its main protagonist, Mir Nihal, with that of the family. Much attention has also been paid to this feeling that it had universal appeal because it focuses on the life, birth, marriage and deaths which are intrinsic to every culture.

Use of metaphor: - Twilight in Delhi is filled with extensive use of metaphor. It begins with the description of the city:

"Night envelops the city, covering it like a blanket in the dim straight roofs and wrapped in rustle slumber breathing heavily as the heat become apprentice or shoots through the body like pain. In the bay came on the road men sleep on bare bed, half naked tired of for the sore days capture A few still walk on the other wise deserted roads, hand in hand, talking and some have jasmine garlands in their herds, the smell from the flower escapes scents a from yards of air around by them and alias smothered by the heat dogs so about sniffing the gutter in search of offal."

Attitude of Indian Muslims: - Another way in which the ethos of Indian Muslims has been conveyed is by making the characters quote poetry. As Coppola points out: **"It is a custom of long standing among Urdu _ speakers to quote lines of poetry copiously, appropriately, and energetically in order to emphasize, to make a point in conversation, or to add elegance to speech and writing."**

Use of couplet: - Thus it would be naïve to look for existential despair in Asghar's reply to his friend Bari's question as to where he has been. He replies by quoting someone else's couplet which does not represent his real feelings but is merely an elegant way of replying to any query:

Life has become a burden; the time is ripe for death.
The space of existence has shrunk into a narrow cell (P. 28)

The couplet is merely used for ornamentation and factitious dramatization of commonplace disappointment in love. The function of poetry was mostly rhetorical in Urdu speaking culture and that is how been used by the characters. The couplets are,

therefore, clichés which substitute a hackneyed formula for an intellectual response to a given experience. But of course, the couplets prefacing chapters are intellectually relevant and emotionally evocative.

Most of the couplets used by narrator express the ethos of the Urdu-speaking middle class. And this class had a distinct world view, a world view which was essentially romantic in eighteen nineties. Three qualities can be discerned in this special world view: nostalgia, sublimation of sexual feelings into vague aestheticism, and world weariness. A pose of wistfulness, ennui and jadedness complement these three dominant qualities. And all these are found in most of the verses quoted. For instance:

I' m the light of no man's eye,
The rest of no one's heart am I.
That which can be of use to none
—Just a handful of dust am I.

These kinds of couplets the theme of regret for a dying culture directly. The self-pity in the poetry is, of course, a reflection of the self-pity which was a part of the Indian ethos before the partition. Ahmed Ali's novel has been able to catch this aspect of Indian culture faithfully.

False sense of diffidence: - One aspect of the male-dominated Urdu speaking culture which has not been revealed out of a false sense of modesty by most other writers, but which has been revealed by Ali, concerns the sexual emotion. As I have mentioned above, sex was suppressed or sublimated. But, mainly because women were in purdah (behind the veil), it took unusual forms. It took, for instance, the form of celebrating the beauty of boys rather than that of women in poetry. Thus the sown on the face (khat) became a conventional attribute of the beloved. One reason for doing this was that in Iran, where the ghazal had its genesis; boys did actually become the beloveds of certain poet. The other reason was that when Persian mystic poets started writing love poetry symbolizing the souls' quest for merging with the Soul of God, the symbol they chose for the beloved was that of a beautiful youth rather than a woman. On the other hand the Indian mystics, Muslims and Hindus, represented God as the lover and the soul as the woman who desires union. As Urdu poetry followed Persian fashions the beloved was addressed by the male pronoun and had some of the physical attributes of adolescent boys (such as khat) though it was often clear otherwise that a woman was being referred to. This literary fashion, and perhaps the absence of women, led to talk between men becoming full of homosexual innuendoes. Ali, with relentless honesty, tells us about this aspect of Muslim culture.

He tells us, for example, that when Asghar lives in Bhopal as an adolescent youth, he was the beloved of men:

He had just to cast a glance and there were many who would have given their lives to do his bidding. At the least sign from him they would have done anything. Then he was the bestower of favours; there he was the loved one and not the lover. To be loved is sweet, he thought, whereas to love is full of sorrow and grief and pain (TD, 23).

We are also told that a man called 'Huzoor Ali was devoted to him' (p.23) and if Asghar had happened to look at him kindly even 'one there had appeared such joy on his face' (p. 23). When Huzoor Ali invites Asghar or dinner and Asghar 'refused and refused until the old man was broken-hearted' (p.24) the lover recites these lines:

Would to God that You
Might also fall in love and suffer
As I am suffering now.

This special kind of homosexuality in which the youth or boy is sought as a female surrogate by the male is also a feature of Greek, Persian and some Arab literature. To distinguish it from the adult peer-group homosexuality common in modern Western literature I have suggested elsewhere that is should be called paedophilia. It is this which was a part of Indian Muslim culture and is not hypocritically dissembled in Twilight.

At its noblest the love between man and youth is described as a mystic or sacred emotion. Kambal Shah, the mystic, tells Mir Nihal and his friends that the real cause of the downfall of the Mughal Empire 'was that they had separated lover and beloved from each other by burying Mohammad Shah between the graves of HazratMahboobElahi and Hazrat Amir Khusro'. The audience listens to this with religious emotion because the two saints mentioned are revered by all. At its most vulgar, of course, the nature of the emotion is purely sensual. In 'Our Lane', for instance, Munno tells Aziz:

I had a cousin. The boy was rather handsome. It was about ten years ago. I sort of fell out with him over a kiss (PH, 21).

This is said seriously but most allusions to sexual feelings of this kind are fictitious. Sometimes there is open buffoonery:

As he [an old man] crossed Asghar, his stick unwittingly touched the old man's behind. As once he turned round and remarked:

I say, moon-bridegroom, even with an old man? ….

A eunuch who sat on the balcony just above in the hope of some stray customer, clapped loudly in a vulgar way and gave a loud guffaw (p.79).

And sometimes the humour is more refined but, in fact behind the humour there is sexual flirtation as in the following scene:

And the lovers found the opportunity of their lives. A middle aged man quoted these lines of an young man with arms open for an embrace,

It is the day of Eid, my dear,
Ah come, let me embrace thee.
It is the custom and besides
There's time and opportunity

What is even more remarkable is that the narrator offers no comment on these scenes. That makes Ahmed Ali one of the few Indian writers who could reveal such tabooed areas of Indian life without either falsifying reality or preaching as Muslim. However, unfortunately, Ali does offer platitudinous comments of a moralistic kind at some places and this flaw of his work must not go unnoticed.

Realism: - To continue with the discussion of the quality of Ali's realism in Twilight, it has been noted that he presents the corporate life through the minor characters who help to create the illusion that one is in India, the land of the crowded houses in which something is always going on. The novel is full of 'servants, beggars and craftsmen'. In fact no other novel catches the nuances of the Muslims culture in Delhi as convincingly as Twilight in Delhi. One can find out all about the details which make a culture come alive in Ali's descriptions. And the descriptions are not as if they were a part of a documentary, they form an organic whole and are, therefore, artistically successful whereas those of Scented Dust were intrusions. In this respect Twilight in Delhi represents an aspect of Indian culture as successfully as Chinua Achebe's Novel Things Fall Apart represents African culture.

Realistic portrayal of culture and traditions: -The novel evokes the culture of Delhi through describing customs and ceremonies minutely and – says Brander – 'the fine wedding chapter reads like an epithalamium in which verse and prose alternate in wonderfully refreshing bridal music'. Even the beggars are described and their songs and mannerisms make them concrete presences and not allude to the superstitions of the time he does so in a manner which reveals his own beliefs. For instance, Kambal Shah, a Faqir who visits Mir Nihal, is described as follows: **He was said to be high up in the mystical order although no one knew his hidden spiritual powers, for such faqirs never reveal themselves to human beings.**

The above quoted lines seem to suggest that the narrator shares in the belief or Mir Nihal and his friends. Since there is no indication that the author was deliberately distinguishing himself from the narrator in this instance, one may assume that Ali to believes in this. On the other hand Mir Nihal also believes that mercury can be converted into silver but here he narrator shows his own scepticism by correcting Mir Nihal credulity when he says: **'Yet no one really did it. Still Mir Nihal believed in its truth and went on hoping against hope'**.

This suggests that the narrator, and by implication the author, had shed off some of the beliefs and ways of looking at life of the Muslim gentlemen of U.P but not all: a conclusion which will help us to understand the theme of the novel.

Theme and Structure: - The theme, the philosophical import of the novel, is based in Ali's subjective response to his declining culture and is, in the last analysis, sentimental and therefore, unsatisfactory. For the theme is the passing away of Muslims civilization in India. The narrator's attitude towards this culture is romantic.

Despite the enthusiastic treatment of Asghar's love for Bilqueece (Ali's own wife is called Bilqueece), the autumnal mood at the novel's close, the grief-stricken regrets for the Mughal past and the frequent opulence of his prose style, Ali w

than a classical standpoint. He recognizes the immutability of the basic elements in human life. Individual dramas come and go …Yet the denominator remains the same in every age.

Ahmad Ali bangs his fatalistic drum and suggests that fate is to blame when things wrong; Achebe relegates the supernatural to the background and shows tragedy to be consequent on the interaction of social forces and human character.

For if it not for hope men would commit suicide by the scores, and the world would remain a barren desert in which no oasis exist. On this tortuous road of life man goes on hoping that the next turn of road will bring him in sight of the goal (TD, 128).

Conclusion: - Several such passages mar the book. Most of the ellipses too suggest much more than is actually warranted by the situation. For this situation in itself does not evoke the response of inexpressible emotion which the ellipses seem to suggest. The author hints at a profundity through them, which is not really there. The purple passages the pseudo philosophical dictums, and the incomplete sentence, point out that the writer is relying on rhetorical devices in order to evoke pathos for a civilization to which he responds for personal reasons but which does not really deserve this response from the reader.

Character-Sketch of Mir Nihal in "Twilight in Delhi"

Mir Nihal: Appearance: - He is tall and well built, and is wearing a white muslin coat reaching down to the knees, and an embroidered round cap is put at a rakish angle on his bobbed head. His white and well-combed beard is parted in the middle, and gives his noble face a majestic look…….

The whole physical description shows that he had a royal appearance with a sober style of wearing cloth .He is nearly a sixty –two year old person whose outward appearance is a picture of Muslims grandeur which they had in past. Ahmed Ali showed him as a "noble". So it can be said about him that he is the representative of the royal Muslim class. his physical appearance has showed the same magnificence as Muslims had in past but inwardly he wasn't able to comprehend the actual scenario .It seems that Ahmed Ali made this character before writing this novel ,there is no further scope for any fundamental change in it .

Passive character: - The nature of this character is totally passive. He has only interest in life: his pigeons and his mistress Babban Jan. The passivity lies in his unreceptive mind in understanding the change in surroundings. He felt that he remained immortal as the Muslims thought in past that their dignity remained forever, but when the colonial forces came in the sub -continent they had changed the entire atmosphere. The matter of Asghar's marriage is the most crucial moment in his life when he showed his refusal then the whole family turned against his decision,and it was the beginning of change.

I had never approved of Ashfaq's marriage to Mirza Shahbaz's daughter,' Mir Nihal said angrily. 'And I do not approve of Asghar's friendship with Bundoo. Why don't you stop him?'.....

But Mir Nihal not able to stop the change and a time came when the women of the family themselves decides to take step;**"The best thing to do is to settle the thing quietly .brother –in-law will come round in the end .if you wait for his consent nothing will ever come off……""Begum Nihal seemed to agree with her sister-in-law…"**

The whole speech from begum Jamal has showed the courage to do something against Mir Nihal .The women in India has a subordinate position in certain matters like marriage etc. so they rebel against the authority.

Snake episode: - Mir Nihal has managed to catch hold of the snake's tail, and pulling it out with all his force he jerks his hand backwards with a quick movement. The snake is seen flying in the air and the next moment Mir Nihal strikes it on the ground and leaves it. It lies there trying to move, but it is only the front half of the snake which is curling and twisting. The back half wriggles but cannot move forward. Its spine is broken. Taking the stick he crushes the hood, and wriggling and moving painfully for a while, it becomes motionless and dies.

The whole episode shows this ability to deal with the danger from outside. He shows his anger on this little invasion but when his own son Asghar shows rebellious attitude then he not able to prove strong resistance because everything worked against him.

Importance of Babban Jan: - Babban jan is the most important personality in Mir Nihal's life. She is the symbol of courage, love and hope in his life. He loved her from the core of his heart but her death destroyed him because

Like Ahmed Ali shows in these lines;**"Mir Nihal got up with a heavy heart and, giving the old woman some money, cast a last lingering glance at the dead body and walked away. She who was Babban Jan had gone,. She who brought him here had walked the way of death, and nothing could bring her back to life again . . . .."**

He was nearly mentally disabled; he left everything because there was no one who gave him mental and sexual solace.

Pigeon's death: - The death of pigeons is one of the severe blows to Mir Nihal. After he came to home and found the loft's door open he got frightened but when he looked in it his whole world sunk because there were few pigeons left and others wings and scattered parts of the body were found here and there. So his whole world now reduced to dust. Pigeons were his treasure now killed by the outside forces (cat).

Cat imagery: - Cat is mostly a symbol of stealth, cunning and destruction in most of his writings. Ahmed Ali has used the cat in this novel to show the dominance of

outside forces. He also identifies cat with the Britishers who have succeed in altering the old ways and they introduced the new progressive ideologies and mores .

Hatred against British: - His hatred against the British or Farangis is quiet obvious throughout the novel .most of the time he shows his contemptuous remarks about the British .like in the first part of the novel he said :

"You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. Throw them away! . . . And where have you been so late in the night? I have told you I don't like your friendship with Bundoo. Do you hear? I shouldn't find you going there again.'……"

A traditional Indian Muslim: - "Twilight in Delhi" is basically a novel about traditions and customs. The whole novel shows Mir Nihal family's lives who were the staunch believers of traditions and customs. Mir Nihal, the head of the family and the protagonist of the novel ,is a traditional Indian Muslim who spend life with the same idea of grandeur and magnificence which the Mughals had in past ,he believed in caste system, and his negation of Asgher ,s marriage with Bilqeece is the proof of his belief on royal blood . His life is a typical Indian Muslim's life who gave importance to the prostitutes not their wives because what he want his wife cannot able to give him.

Mir Nihal's paralysis: - Mir Nihal's paralysis is highly symbolical; it shows the paralyzed condition of the Muslims in the world of British colonial forces. Throughout the whole novel he showed huge amount of resistance in adopting change and in the end time had restricted him in one place and the whole civilization had changed.

Conclusion: - The world or the affairs of the family, his wishes are no consequence .formerly he wished to cry over the ups and the downs of life but In the end he does not even have the desire to do that. Asghar comes to him wearing English clothes but not even object. His body has already become paralyzed; his heart and the mind are atrophied as well. The spring of life now seemed to an end.

Asghar's Character in "Twilight in Delhi"

Appearance: - Asghar is the second most important character of the novel. He seemed revolutionary in approach and intention (as far as Mir nihal, s authority is concern). He is a young man of twenty-two and the youngest son of Mir nihal. Ahmed Ali introduces him in the first chapter of part I of the novel:

"He (Asghar) is a tall and handsome young man with his hair well-oiled and his red Turkish cap cocked at a smart angle on his head. The upper buttons of his sherwani are open and show the collar of the English shirt that he is wearing under it. He looks an aesthete, and has a somewhat effeminate grace about him. And round his wrist is wrapped a jasmine garland. As he enters his pumps creak"

The whole appearance of Asghar shows the difference. He belonged to one of those youngsters whose life is in transition, they lived in a multicultural society. So Asghar's appearance shows the eastern and western touch in it. Asghar seemed as the representative of the Indian Muslim youth who are directionless.

Asghar a symbol of change: - Mir Nihal stops and turns to Asghar and says in an angry tone:**"You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis is my house. Throw them away! …"**

This statement from Mir Nihal shows that right from the beginning Asghar seems entirely changed from his family.

Asghar is the only son of Mir Nihal who showed his opinion to choose bride himself ,on a superficial level it seems nothing but on a symbolical level it is a threat to the dominance of Mir Nihal. His view of marrying Bilqueece; shows the rebelliousness from the old orthodox style of Mir Nihal. The two severe blows in Mir Nihal, s life made him weak that is why Asghar and his family can able to take the step against the authority.

Asghar: A Traditional Lover: - Asghar went hurriedly past and was lost in the crowd which flowed outside the mohallah. His eyes fell on an oldish man in the crowd. He was dressed only in a shirt and paijama, and on his head rested a round cap stiff with starch, and flowers were embroidered on it in brown thread. His long beard fell over his chest in a fine array. There was something sad and unknown in his eyes and they seemed to be looking for someone, a friend who had been separated, or a loved one far away. Asghar was reminded of his life at Bhopal and of those happy days when he had love to receive and nothing to give at all. He had just to cast a glance and there were many who would have given their lives to do his bidding. At the least sign from him they would have done anything. There he was the bestower of favours; there he was the loved one and not the lover. To be loved is sweet, he thought, whereas to love is full of sorrow and grief and pain. He had never known that the path of love was fraught with so much hardship and frustration.

As he saw this man in the crowd he suddenly realized that he must have caused so much pain to so many. He had never known what it meant, so he did not do it knowingly. Even if he had known, would it have changed his attitude? He did not know. He was filled with the pride of youth, and the wine of life was coursing in his veins. He did not ask those people to lavish love and care on him. If they burnt themselves like moths he was surely not to blame.

Still, he could not help thinking of one of them especially, Huzoor Ali, who resembled the man in the crowd. Time and again he had seen the same sad look in his eyes. Huzoor Ali was so devoted to him, but he had always ignored him. If Asghar had happened to look at him kindly even once there had appeared such joy on his face.

But though Asghar had behaved more kindly with others he was always, somehow, indifferent to Huzoor Ali. He wanted him to do things for him, perhaps, but he did not wish to please him even with a kind word.

He realized all this today when he was himself in love and there seemed no way of compelling his sweetheart to take notice of him. Yet an insidious wave of optimism swept over him and he repeated to himself the line of Hafiz:

Love is created first in the heart of the beloved. But it was so short-lived. Huzoor Ali had not succeeded in making Asghar love him. And he thought of an evening when Huzoor Ali had insisted on his coming to dinner at his place. He had refused and refused until the old man was broken-hearted and, heaving a sigh, he had cursed him gently by repeating the lines. All this description about Asghar's attitude shows that he is like a traditional lover of the sub-continent.

Right from the beginning we came to know that he is an in-satiated personality. His longing for sexual pleasure and intimacy can found nearly in every chapter of the novel. He felt that there is no pleasure in his fate. After the refusal from father, s side about his marriage with Bilqueece; he become utterly disappointed from life .always remained depressed he often thought of death. His remembering of the man's curse:

"Would to god that you
Might also fall in love and suffer
As I am suffering now.

The curse had come true, Asghar thought: and there seemed no way out of it ."

Asghar's restlessness and disappointment can be found in these lines**"Asghar felt very self –conscious. There was a peculiar sadness in his heart, and he felt restless."**

" o god, give me death. I am tired of this life…"
"life has become a burden , the time is ripe for death;
The space of existence has shrunk into a narrow cell"

Views about Bilqueece: - 'She is beautiful, Bari, very beautiful,' Asghar said. 'She is graceful as a cypress. Her hair is blacker than the night of separation, and her face is brighter than the hours of love. Her eyes are like narcissi, big and beautiful. There is nectar in their whites and poison in their blacks. Her eyebrows are like two arched bows ready to wound the hearts of men with the arrows of their lashes. Her lips are redder than the blood of lovers, and her teeth look like pearls studded in a row.... I tell you she is beautiful.'…….

Conclusion: - Ahmed Ali has showed a complete picture of sub-continent bachelor who is the representative of the young generation of the early part of the twentieth century. His complexpersonality, his longing for true intimacy and rebellious attitude nearly found throughout the whole course of the novel.

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe : Things Fall Apart

Early Years: - Chinua Achebe (pronounced Chee-noo-ah Ah-chay-bay) is considered by many critics and teachers to be the most influential African writer of his generation. His writings, including the novel Things Fall Apart, have introduced readers throughout the world to creative uses of language and form, as well as to factual inside accounts of modern African life and history. Not only through his literary contributions but also through his championing of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa, Achebe has helped reshape the perception of African history, culture, and place in world affairs.

The first novel of Achebe's, Things Fall Apart, is recognized as a literary classic and is taught and read everywhere in the English-speaking world. The novel has been translated into at least forty-five languages and has sold several million copies. A year after publication, the book won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize, a major literary award.

Achebe was born in the Igbo (formerly spelled Ibo) town of Ogidi in eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930, the fifth child of Isaiah Okafor Achebe and Janet Iloegbunam Achebe. His father was an instructor in Christian catechism for the Church Missionary Society. Nigeria was a British colony during Achebe's early years, and educated English-speaking families like the Achebes occupied a privileged position in the Nigerian power structure. His parents even named him Albert, after Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. (Achebe himself chose his Igbo name when he was in college.)

Education: - Achebe attended the Church Missionary Society's school where the primary language of instruction for the first two years was Igbo. At about eight, he began learning English. His relatively late introduction to English allowed Achebe to develop a sense of cultural pride and an appreciation of his native tongue — values that may not have been cultivated had he been raised and taught exclusively in English. Achebe's home fostered his understanding of both cultures: He read books in English in his father's library, and he spent hours listening to his mother and sisters tell traditional Igbo stories.

At fourteen, Achebe was selected to attend the Government College in Umuahia, the equivalent of a university preparatory school and considered the best in West Africa. Achebe excelled at his studies, and after graduating at eighteen, he was accepted to study medicine at the new University College at Ibadan, a member college of London University at the time. The demand for educated Nigerians in the government was heightened because Nigeria was preparing for self-rule and independence. Only with a college degree was a Nigerian likely to enter the higher ranks of the civil service.

The growing nationalism in Nigeria was not lost on Achebe. At the university, he dropped his English name "Albert" in favor of the Igbo name "Chinua,'

Just as Igbo names in Things Fall Apart have literal meanings, Chinualumogo is translated as "My spirit come fight for me."

At University College, Achebe switched his studies to liberal arts, including history, religion, and English. His first published stories appeared in the student publication the University Herald. These stories have been reprinted in the collection Girls at War and Other Stories, which was published in 1972. Of his student writings, only a few are significantly relative to his more mature works; short stories such as "Marriage is a Private Affair" and "Dead Man's Path" explore the conflicts that arise when Western culture meets African society.

Career Highlights: - After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1953, Achebe joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation as a producer of radio talks. In 1956, he went to London to attend the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Staff School. While in London, he submitted the manuscript for Things Fall Apart to a publisher, with the encouragement and support of one of his BBC instructors, a writer and literary critic. The novel was published in 1958 by Heinemann, a publishing firm that began a long relationship with Achebe and his work. Fame came almost instantly. Achebe has said that he never experienced the life of a struggling writer.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Achebe rose rapidly within the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. As founder and director of the Voice of Nigeria in 1961, Achebe and his colleagues aimed at developing more national identity and unity through radio programs that highlighted Nigerian affairs and culture.

Political Problems: - Turmoil in Nigeria from 1966 to 1972 was matched by turmoil for Achebe. In 1966, young Igbo officers in the Nigerian army staged a coup d'ètat. Six months later, another coup by non-Igbo officers overthrew the Igbo-led government. The new government targeted Achebe for persecution, knowing that his views were unsympathetic to the new regime. Achebe fled to Nsukka in eastern Nigeria, which is predominantly Igbo-speaking, and he became a senior research fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In 1967, the eastern part of Nigeria declared independence as the nation of Biafra. This incident triggered thirty months of civil war that ended only when Biafra was defeated. Achebe then fled to Europe and America, where he wrote and talked about Biafran affairs.

Later Writing: - Like many other African writers, Achebe believes that artistic and literary works must deal primarily with the problems of society. He has said that "art is, and always was, at the service of man" rather than an end in itself, accountable to no one. He believes that "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose."

Continuing his relationship with Heinemann, Achebe published four other novels: No Longer at Ease (the 1960 sequel to Things Fall Apart), Arrow of God (1964), A Man of the People (1966), and Anthills of the Savannah (1987). He also wrote and published several children's books that express his basic views in forms and language understandable to young readers.

In his later books, Achebe confronts the problems faced by Nigeria and other newly independent African nations. He blames the nation's problems on the lack of leadership in Nigeria since its independence. In 1983, he published The Trouble with Nigeria, a critique of corrupt politicians in his country. Achebe has also published two collections of short stories and three collections of essays. He is the founding editor of Heinemann's African Writers series; the founder and publisher of UwaNdi Igbo: A Bilingual Journal of Igbo Life and Arts; and the editor of the magazine Okike, Nigeria's leading journal of new writing.

Teaching and Literary Awards: - In addition to his writing career, Achebe has maintained an active teaching career. In 1972, he was appointed to a three-year visiting professorship at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and, in 1975, to a one-year visiting professorship at the University of Connecticut. In 1976, with matters sufficiently calm in Nigeria, he returned as professor of English at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with which he had been affiliated since 1966. In 1990, he became the Charles P. Stevenson, Jr., professor of literature at Bard College, Annandale, New York.

Achebe has received many awards from academic and cultural institutions around the world. In 1959, he won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize for Things Fall Apart. The following year, after the publication of its sequel, No Longer At Ease, he was awarded the Nigerian National Trophy for Literature. His book of poetry, Christmas in Biafra, written during the Nigerian civil war, won the first Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1972. More than twenty universities in Great Britain, Canada, Nigeria, and the United States have awarded Achebe honorary degrees.

About “Things Fall Apart”

Introduction: - Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is probably the most authentic narrative ever written about life in Nigeria at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the novel was first published in 1958 — two years before Nigeria achieved its independence — thousands of copies are still sold every year in the United States alone. Millions of copies have been sold around the world in its many translations. The novel has been adapted for productions on the stage, on the radio, and on television. Teachers in high schools, colleges, and graduate schools use the novel as a textbook in many types of classes — from history and social studies to comparative literature and anthropology.

The novel takes its title from a verse in the poem "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats, an Irish poet, essayist, and dramatist:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

In this poem — ironically, a product of European thought — Yeats describes an apocalyptic vision in which the world collapses into anarchy because of an internal flaw in

humanity. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe illustrates this vision by showing us what happened in the Igbo society of Nigeria at the time of its colonization by the British. Because of internal weaknesses within the native structure and the divided nature of Igbo society, the community of Umuofia in this novel is unable to withstand the tidal wave of foreign religion, commerce, technology, and government. In "The Second Coming," Yeats evokes the anti-Christ leading an anarchic world to destruction. This ominous tone gradually emerges in *Things Fall Apart*as an intrusive religious presence and an insensitive government together cause the traditional Umuofian world to fall apart.

Literary Purpose: - When *Things Fall Apart* was first published, Achebe announced that one of his purposes was to present a complex, dynamic society to a Western audience who perceived African society as primitive, simple, and backward. Unless Africans could tell their side of their story, Achebe believed that the African experience would forever be "mistold," even by such well-meaning authors as Joyce Cary in *Mister Johnson*. Cary worked in Nigeria as a colonial administrator and was sympathetic to the Nigerian people. Yet Achebe feels that Cary, along with other Western writers such as Joseph Conrad, misunderstood Africa. Many European writers have presented the continent as a dark place inhabited by people with impenetrable, primitive minds; Achebe considers this reductionist portrayal of Africa racist. He points to Conrad, who wrote against imperialism but reduced Africans to mysterious, animalistic, and exotic "others." In an interview published in 1994, Achebe explains that his anger about the inaccurate portrayal of African culture by white colonial writers does not imply that students should not read works by Conrad or Cary. On the contrary, Achebe urges students to read such works in order to better understand the racism of the colonial era.

Achebe also kept in mind his own Nigerian people as an audience. In 1964, he stated his goal:

to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. . . . I would be quite satisfied if my novels . . . did no more than teach my [African] readers that their past — with all its imperfections — was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the Europeans' understanding of Africa is particularly exemplified in two characters: the Reverend James Smith and the unnamed District Commissioner. Mr. Smith sees no need to compromise on unquestionable religious doctrine or practices, even during their introduction to a society very different from his own. He simply does not recognize any benefit for allowing the Nigerians to retain elements of their heritage. The District Commissioner, on the other hand, prides himself on being a student of primitive customs and sees himself as a benevolent leader who has only the best intentions for pacifying the primitive tribes and bringing them into the modern era. Both men would express surprise if anyone suggested to them that their European values may not be entirely appropriate for these societies. The Commissioner's plan for briefly treating the story of Okonkwo illustrates the inclination toward Western simplification and essentialization of African culture.

To counter this inclination, Achebe brings to life an African culture with a religion, a government, a system of money, and an artistic tradition, as well as a judicial system. While technologically unsophisticated, the Igbo culture is revealed to the reader as remarkably complex. Furthermore, *Things Fall Apart* ironically reverses the style of novels by such writers as Conrad and Cary, who created flat and stereotypical African characters. Instead, Achebe stereotypes the white colonialists as rigid, most with imperialistic intentions, whereas the Igbos are highly individual, many of them open to new ideas.

But readers should note that Achebe is not presenting Igbo culture as faultless and idyllic. Indeed, Achebe would contest such a romantic portrayal of his native people. In fact, many Western writers who wrote about colonialism (including Joseph Conrad, George Orwell, Herman Melville, and Graham Greene) were opposed to imperialism but were romantic in their portrayal of noble savages — primitive and animalistic, yet uncorrupted and innocent. The opposition to imperialism that such authors voiced often rested on the notion that an advanced Western society corrupts and destroys the non-Western world. Achebe regards this notion as an unacceptable argument as well as a myth. The Igbos were not noble savages, and although the Igbo world was eventually destroyed, the indigenous culture was never an idyllic haven, even before the arrival of the white colonialists. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe depicts negative as well as positive elements of Igbo culture, and he is sometimes as critical of his own people as he is of the colonizers.

Achebe has been a major force in the worldwide literary movement to define and describe this African experience. Other postcolonial writers in this movement include Leopold Senghor, Wole Soyinka, AimeCesaire, Derek Walcott, NgugiwaThiong'o, and BiragoDiop. These writers not only confront a multiethnic perspective of history and truth, but they also challenge readers to reexamine themselves in this complex and evolving world.

As an African novel written in English and departing significantly from more familiar colonial writing, *Things Fall Apart* was a ground breaking work. Achebe's role in making modern African literature a part of world literature cannot be understated.

Note: Throughout this novel, Achebe uses the spelling *Ibo*, the old spelling of the Umuofian community.

A Brief History of Nigeria: - The history of Nigeria is bound up with its geography. About one-third larger than the state of Texas, Nigeria is located above the inner curve of the elbow on the west coast of Africa, just north of the equator and south of the Sahara Desert. More than two hundred ethnic groups — each with its own language, beliefs, and culture — live in present-day Nigeria. The largest ethnic groups are the mostly Protestant Yoruba in the west, the Catholic Igbo in the east, and the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north. This diversity of peoples is the result of thousands of years of history; as traders, nomads, and refugees from invaders and climatic changes came to settle with the indigenous population, and as foreign nations became aware of the area's resources.

The events in *Things Fall Apart* take place at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century. Although the British did not occupy most of Nigeria until 1904, they had a strong presence in West Africa since the early nineteenth century. The British were a major buyer of African slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In 1807, however, the British outlawed slave trade within their empire. At the time, they did not yet control Nigeria, and internal wars continually increased the available supply of captured slaves. In 1861, frustrated with the expanding slave trade, the British decided to occupy Lagos, a major slave-trading post and the capital of present-day Nigeria. Slowly and hesitantly, the British occupied the rest of Nigeria.

Ultimately, the British were prompted to occupy Nigeria for more than the slave trade. The British were in competition with other Europeans for control of the natural wealth of West Africa. At the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 — a meeting arranged to settle rivalries among European powers — the British proclaimed Nigeria to be their territory. They bought palm oil, peanuts, rubber, cotton, and other agricultural products from the Nigerians. Indeed, trade in these products made some Nigerian traders very wealthy. In the early twentieth century, the British defined the collection of diverse ethnic groups as one country, Nigeria, and declared it a colony of the British Empire.

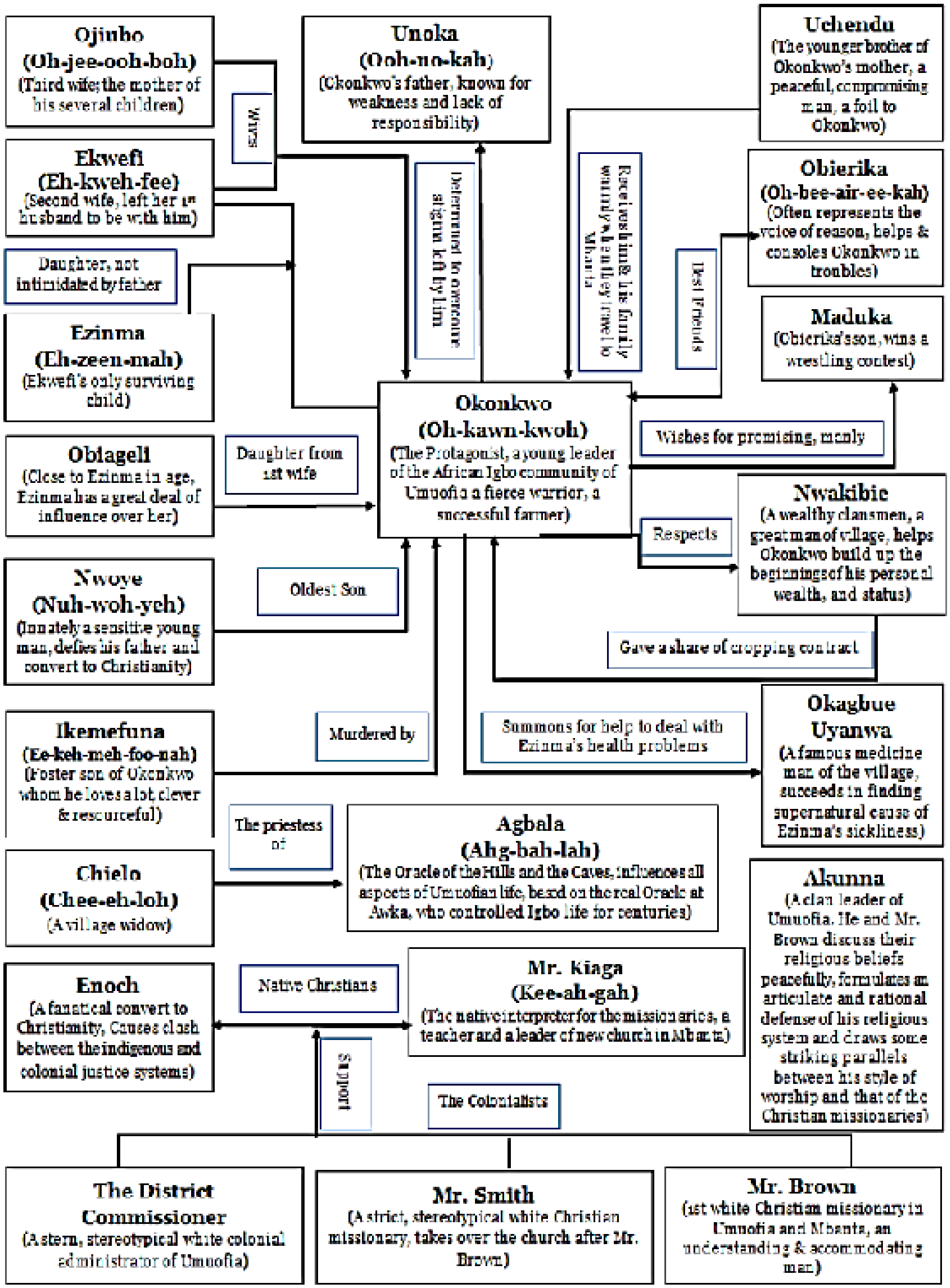
The British moved into Nigeria with a combination of government control, religious mission, and economic incentive. In the north, the British ruled indirectly, with the support of the local Muslim leaders, who collected taxes and administered a government on behalf of the British. In the south, however, where communities (such as Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*) were often not under one central authority, the British had to intervene directly and forcefully to control the local population.

For example, a real-life tragedy at the community of Ahiara serves as the historical model for the massacre of the village of Abame in Chapter 15 of *Things Fall Apart*. On November 16, 1905, a white man rode his bicycle into Ahiara and was killed by the natives. A month later, an expedition of British forces searched the villages in the area and killed many natives in reprisal.

The Ahiara incident led to the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition, a force created to eliminate Igbo opposition. The British destroyed the powerful Awka Oracle and killed all opposing Igbo groups. In 1912, the British instituted the Collective Punishment Ordinance, which stipulated punishment against an entire village or community for crimes committed by one or more persons against the white colonialists.

The British operated an efficient administrative system and introduced a form of British culture to Nigeria. They also sent many capable young Nigerians to England for education. The experience of Nigerians who lived overseas in the years preceding, during, and after World War II gave rise to a class of young, educated nationalists who agitated for independence from Great Britain. The British agreed to the Nigerians' demands and, in 1947, instituted a ten-year economic plan toward independence. Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960, and became a republic in 1963.

With the British long gone from Nigeria, corruption and a lack of leadership continued to hamper Nigeria's quest for true democracy. A series of military coups and dictatorships in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s replaced the fragile democracy that Nigeria enjoyed in the early 1960s. In 1993, Nigeria held a democratic presidential election, which was followed by yet another bloodless coup. And so continues the political pattern for the troubled, violent, most populous country in Africa.



Things Fall Apart : Book Summary

Things Fall Apart is about the tragic fall of the protagonist, Okonkwo, and the Igbo culture. Okonkwo is a respected and influential leader within the Igbo community of

Umuofia in eastern Nigeria. He first earns personal fame and distinction, and brings honour to his village, when he defeats Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest. Okonkwo determines to gain titles for himself and become a powerful and wealthy man in spite of his father's weaknesses.

Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was a lazy and wasteful man. He often borrowed money and then squandered it on palm-wine and merrymaking with friends. Consequently, his wife and children often went hungry. Within the community, Unoka was considered a failure and a laughingstock. He was referred to as agbala, one who resembles the weakness of a woman and has no property. Unoka died a shameful death and left numerous debts.

Okonkwo despises and resents his father's gentle and idle ways. He resolves to overcome the shame that he feels as a result of his father's weaknesses by being what he considers to be "manly"; therefore, he dominates his wives and children by being insensitive and controlling.

Because Okonkwo is a leader of his community, he is asked to care for a young boy named Ikemefuna, who is given to the village as a peace offering by neighbouring Mbaino to avoid war with Umuofia. Ikemefuna befriends Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, and Okonkwo becomes inwardly fond of the boy.

Over the years, Okonkwo becomes an extremely volatile man; he is apt to explode at the slightest provocation. He violates the Week of Peace when he beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, because she went to braid her hair at a friend's house and forgot to prepare the afternoon meal and feed her children. Later, he severely beats and shoots a gun at his second wife, Ekwefi, because she took leaves from his banana plant to wrap food for the Feast of the New Yam.

After the coming of the locusts, Ogbuefi Ezeuder, the oldest man in the village, relays to Okonkwo a message from the Oracle. The Oracle says that Ikemefuna must be killed as part of the retribution for the Umuofian woman killed three years earlier in Mbaino. He tells Okonkwo not to partake in the murder, but Okonkwo doesn't listen. He feels that not participating would be a sign of weakness. Consequently, Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna with his machete. Nwoye realizes that his father has murdered Ikemefuna and begins to distance himself from his father and the clansmen.

Okonkwo becomes depressed after killing Ikemefuna, so he visits his best friend, Obierika, who disapproves of his role in Ikemefuna's killing. Obierika says that Okonkwo's act will upset the Earth and the earth goddess will seek revenge. After discussing Ikemefuna's death with Obierika, Okonkwo is finally able to sleep restfully, but he is awakened by his wife Ekwefi. Their daughter Ezinma, whom Okonkwo is fond of, is dying. Okonkwo gathers grasses, barks, and leaves to prepare medicine for Ezinma.

A public trial is held on the village commons. Nine clan leaders, including Okonkwo, represent the spirits of their ancestors. The nine clan leaders, or egwugwu, also represent the nine villages of Umuofia. Okonkwo does not sit among the other eight leaders, or elders, while they listen to a dispute between ar

wife. The wife, Mgbafo, had been severely beaten by her husband. Her brother took her back to their family's village, but her husband wanted her back home. The egwugwu tell the husband to take wine to his in-laws and beg his wife to come home. One elder wonders why such a trivial dispute would come before the egwugwu.

In her role as priestess, Chielo tells Ekwefi (Okonkwo's second wife) that Agbala (the Oracle of the Hills and Caves) needs to see Ezinma. Although Okonkwo and Ekwefi protest, Chielo takes a terrified Ezinma on her back and forbids anyone to follow. Chielo carries Ezinma to all nine villages and then enters the Oracle's cave. Ekwefi follows secretly, in spite of Chielo's admonitions, and waits at the entrance of the Oracle. Okonkwo surprises Ekwefi by arriving at the cave, and he also waits with her. The next morning, Chielo takes Ezinma to Ekwefi's hut and puts her to bed.

When Ogbuefi Ezeudu dies, Okonkwo worries because the last time that Ezeudu visited him was when he warned Okonkwo against participating in the killing of Ikemefuna. Ezeudu was an important leader in the village and achieved three titles of the clan's four, a rare accomplishment. During the large funeral, Okonkwo's gun goes off, and Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son is killed accidentally.

Because the accidental killing of a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, Okonkwo and his family must be exiled from Umuofia for seven years. The family moves to Okonkwo's mother's native village, Mbanta. After they depart Umuofia, a group of village men destroy Okonkwo's compound and kill his animals to cleanse the village of Okonkwo's sin. Obierika stores Okonkwo's yams in his barn and wonders about the old traditions of the Igbo culture.

Okonkwo is welcomed to Mbanta by his maternal uncle, Uchendu, a village elder. He gives Okonkwo a plot of land on which to farm and build a compound for his family. But Okonkwo is depressed, and he blames his chi (or personal spirit) for his failure to achieve lasting greatness.

During Okonkwo's second year in exile, he receives a visit from his best friend, Obierika, who recounts sad news about the village of Abame: After a white man rode into the village on a bicycle, the elders of Abame consulted their Oracle, which told them that the white man would destroy their clan and other clans. Consequently, the villagers killed the white man. But weeks later, a large group of men slaughtered the villagers in retribution. The village of Abame is now deserted.

Okonkwo and Uchendu agree that the villagers were foolish to kill a man whom they knew nothing about. Later, Obierika gives Okonkwo money that he received from selling Okonkwo's yams and seed-yams, and he promises to do so until Okonkwo returns to Umuofia.

Six missionaries, including one white man, arrive in Mbanta. The white man speaks to the people about Christianity. Okonkwo believes that the man speaks nonsense, but his son, Nwoye, is captivated and becomes a convert of Christianity.

The Christian missionaries build a church on land given to them by the village leaders. However, the land is a part of the Evil Forest, and according to tradition, the villagers believe that the missionaries will die because they built their church on cursed land. But when nothing happens to the missionaries, the people of Mbanta conclude that the missionaries possess extraordinary power and magic. The first recruits of the missionaries are efulefu, the weak and worthless men of the village. Other villagers, including a woman, soon convert to Christianity. The missionaries then go to Umuofia and start a school. Nwoye leaves his father's hut and moves to Umuofia so he can attend the school.

Okonkwo's exile is over, so his family arranges to return to Umuofia. Before leaving Mbanta, they prepare a huge feast for Okonkwo's mother's kinsmen in appreciation of their gratitude during Okonkwo's seven years of exile.

When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, he discovers that the village has changed during his absence. Many men have renounced their titles and have converted to Christianity. The white men have built a prison; they have established a government court of law, where people are tried for breaking the white man's laws; and they also employ natives of Umuofia. Okonkwo wonders why the Umuofians have not incited violence to rid the village of the white man's church and oppressive government.

Some members of the Igbo clan like the changes in Umuofia. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, respects the Igbo traditions. He makes an effort to learn about the Igbo culture and becomes friendly with some of the clan leaders. He also encourages Igbo people of all ages to get an education. Mr. Brown tells Okonkwo that Nwoye, who has taken the name Isaac, is attending a teaching college. Nevertheless, Okonkwo is unhappy about the changes in Umuofia.

After Mr. Brown becomes ill and is forced to return to his homeland, Reverend James Smith becomes the new head of the Christian church. But Reverend Smith is nothing like Mr. Brown; he is intolerant of clan customs and is very strict.

Violence arises after Enoch, an overzealous convert to Christianity, unmasks an egwugwu. In retaliation, the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound and then destroy the Christian church because the missionaries have caused the Igbo people many problems.

When the District Commissioner returns to Umuofia, he learns about the destruction of the church and asks six leaders of the village, including Okonkwo, to meet with him. The men are jailed until they pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries. The people of Umuofia collect the money and pay the fine, and the men are set free.

The next day at a meeting for clansmen, five court messengers who intend to stop the gathering approach the group. Suddenly, Okonkwo jumps forward and beheads the man in charge of the messengers with his machete. When none of the other clansmen attempt to stop the messengers who escape, Okonkwo realizes that they will never go to war and that Umuofia will surrender. Everything has fallen apart for Okonkwo; he commits suicide by hanging himself.

Sources of Achebe's Things Fall Apart

"Things Fall Apart" provides an important moral lesson to its leaders. Achebe conceives the primary function of literature to be moral or ethical in nature. According to him the power of the novelist lies on his ability to appeal to the mind and to reach beyond his or her particular circumstance and thus, speak to different periods and generations; the good story-teller is not bound by narrow political or personal concerns or even by the demands of specific historical moments.

Achebe's sympathies, then are not with the heroic character (in this case Okonkwo), but the witness or storyteller (Obierika) who refuses to endorse Okonkwo's commitment to the central doctrines of his culture or the European colonizer's arrogant use of power.

However, the novelist's ability to bring the historical period and his moment of writing together also depended on a notable relationship between his life and his work. As an author, Achebe may be separated from the central event in Things Fall Apart by a period of seventy years, but his own biography is very much a part of the story he tells and its context. Achebe's family occupies a central role in the history which his novel narrates. We know, for example, that his great grandfather was the man who first received Christian missionaries in the village of Ogidi (Umuofia in the novel). More significantly, Achebe's father, Isaiah Okafo (like Nwoye in the novel), was one of the first converts to Christianity in the area and worked for many years as an evangelist and teacher in the Christian Missionary Society, the evangelical branch of the Church of England. This family history is important to our understanding of Things Fall Apart not so much because it invites us to read the author's life in the novel itself. For if the African identity of the novel derives from its acute sense of the oral tradition, and then this is an acknowledgement of the influences of the Ibo stories which Achebe used to hear from his own Christian relatives. It was from the older people in his village that Achebe came to develop an awareness of the history of Ibo people before colonization, a history which is an important aspect of the First Part of Things Fall Apart.

But it would be a mistake to assume that Achebe grew up with a profound understanding and respect for the African past. One of the ironic aspects of being born in a family of African converts to Christianity was that one's status in society depended on a certain self-alienation from the old culture. 'The line between Christian and non-Christian was much more definite in my village forty years ago, than it is today, Achebe observed in 1973.

Although Achebe's first novel is a celebration of the pre-colonial past, it is important to emphasize this sense of superiority among African Christians for one overwhelming reason, it was out of this identification with the culture of colonialism—and his ultimate disillusionment with it—that Achebe became a writer. He was not only brought up in a Christian family, and thus, identified with European culture; his early education was in church schools where the influence of the Bible and biblical stories, Christian moral codes, and indeed modern civility were emphasized. In addition, Achebe's secondary education at the prestigious government school at Umuabia could not but draw him even further into the culture of colonialism. Such schools were modelled after British public

schools which meant that the values they promoted—in scholarship, sports, and conduct—were essentially English. When he arrived at the University of Ibadan in 1948, Achebe was expected to read the major texts of the English tradition, including most notably Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. But by 1948, this acculturation in Englishness was being challenged by African nationalism: advocates of African independence and cultural renewal were beginning to question the central notion in colonial education—the assumption that an African destiny included a future European identify for which the present is but an apprenticeship; in addition, the nationalist movement had brought about a mental revolution.

Since his mental revolution was connected so implicitly to the writing of Things Fall Apart, it is important that readers consider what we may call its cultural politics. Simply put, the writing of this novel marked a radical change in Achebe's way of looking at himself and his culture and in his conception of literature itself. For if we accept the general argument that colonial rule justified itself through the process of writing and rewriting other people's histories and cultural practices, as the last paragraph of Things Fall Apart seems to assert, then we must pay closer attention to the fundamental relationship between the kind of reading communities in which Achebe was brought up and the kind of novel he produced in 1958. Two forms of reading communities are involved: that of the family, and that of the school.

Achebe grew up in a household in which books were revered and played an important role in the visualization of modern life: As the fifth in a family of six children and with parents so passionate for their children's education, "I inherited many discarded books ... I remember also my mother's IjeOnyeKraist which must have been an Ibo adaptation of Pilgrim's progress." Many of these books, most notably the Bible, were later to influence Achebe's literary works as much as the Ibo stories he heard as a child. The Ikemefuna episode in Things Fall Apart, to cite just one example is fashioned after Abraham's aborted sacrifice of Isaac in the Old Testament.

In high schools, as Achebe observed later, he was exposed to English books such as Treasure Island and Oliver Twist. The most significant impact of these books was on Achebe's view of the world: on reading these books, he observed, 'I did not see myself as an African to begin with ... I went through my first level of schooling thinking I was of the party of white man in his hair-raising adventures and narrow escapes' (Chinua Achebe). At University College, Ibadan, Achebe was introduced to famous European writers who had set their novels in Africa, such as Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, and Graham Greene. But by now, instead of identifying with the European adventurers against their African counterparts, Achebe felt impelled to represent the historical encounter between Europe and Africa from an African perspective. The connection between Achebe's reading of the colonial novel and his decision to become a writer is found a mental to our understanding of the cultural function of Things Fall Apart. 'I suddenly saw that these books had to be read in a different light.' "Reading 'Heart of Darkness', for instance,... I realized that I was one of those savages jumping up and down on the beach. Once that kind of enlightenment comes to you, you realize that someone has to write a different story."

Things Fall Apart is certainly not the first African novel, but it was probably the first work in which the author set out to represent the African experience in a narrative that sought, self-consciously, to be different from the colonial novel. Since its publication in 1958, Achebe's novel has served as a model for other African writers, and indeed, for a different kind of literature in English Achebe's goal in this novel is to Indicate to his readers that we in Africa did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans has changed the way African readers perceive their own cultures and their relationship to colonial institutions. Achebe is the man who invented African literature because he was able to show, in the structure and language of his first novel, that the future of African writing did not lie in simple imitation of European forms but in the fusion of such forms with oral traditions. Achebe is the conscience of African literature because he has consistently insisted on the power of story tellers to appeal to the morality and humanity of their readers and to give their life fuller meaning.

Religious life of Ibo society

Human faith in different spiritual powers is regarded as religion which also includes spiritual customs and traditions relating to gods and goddesses. Ibo society also believed that one must have faith in one's ancestors to be blessed with good health, good luck, and many children. Achebe, in 'Things Fall Apart' depicts religious beliefs of the Ibo society in detail. Minute study of the novel reveals that these people did not act contrary to the customs and traditions akin to their duties.

Every man of the clan was well aware of the ill consequences if he violated the rules of the conduct as provided for in their religious scriptures. The religion of the above society was based on two forms of religion—higher and lower. The belief in the supremacy of God was termed a higher form of religion and the faith in the existence of other gods and goddesses was regarded as lower term. Besides a few like Akunna, Ibo people believed in the worship of the smaller gods, who according to them controlled everything. So they worshipped them to be flourished in their lives and also to be saved from facing calamities. Few of the gods and goddesses whom lgbo people worshipped are as under:—

(a)Oracles—Oracles were religious shrines that discharged both judicial and messenger's duties from dead relatives and passed them on to the living beings. They explained to curious relatives why a person had died. They warned individuals and whole community about impending dangers and offered advice on ritual matters. A community might consult Oracles if disturbed by a high death rate, or an unduly high rate of twin-births, or successive bad harvests. Oracles also acted as courts of appeal in judicial matters. Individuals might take their dispute to an Oracle if they failed to reconcile their differences. If a man felt that he had been wrongfully accused of a crime, he might take the matter to an Oracle, who might exonerate him or confirm the guilt. Oracles were feared and respected for miles around, one example was that of the Aro Oracle, known to Europeans as the long Juju. The Aro Oracle was consulted by traders from many areas to settle business disputes. Oracles were housed in secret groves, surrounded by thick bush. The home of an Oracle was a forbidden territory. For the Ibo believed that anyone who saw an Oracle would surely die. Only the chief priestess (or priest) ever looked upon

the face of the Oracle. Supplicants never approached an Oracle directly. The chief priestess of an Oracle served as the mouthpiece of the deity that dwelt in the shrine. Her words were final in all matters, because the forces she represented were higher than all secular powers. To disobey the orders of the priestess was to disobey the deity she represented. The chief priestess might combine her oracular services with other vocations like trading or farming. She and her agents received gifts of money, foodstuffs, and livestock for their services, and they might demand certain sacrifices as well.

The Ibo believed that their Oracles would offer impartial decisions in judicial matters. So great was the confidence they reposed in their oracles that they would willingly pay large sums of money to consult them and accept whatever verdict they might pronounce. Most of the agents of the oracles travelled far and wide as medicine men, divines, traders and smiths, playing their different roles.

In Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart, we find reference of oracle's importance. The oracle of the hills and the caves could not be disobeyed by the inhabitants of the nine villages. If the clan did not abide by what the oracle wished, it used to be cursed and beaten badly. Chiela was the priestess of Agbala, the oracle of the hills and the caves. In ordinary life, she was a widow with two children but she was a different person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her. People came from far and near to consult Agbala when they were haunted by misfortune. No one had seen this deity except his priestess Unoka, once went to Agbala to know why he did not have good harvest. It was said that when such a spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness. Some people had seen this spirit flying in the cave.

(b) Chukwu—In every religion, there is one supreme power governing the whole world. Ibo people called this power 'Chukwu'. There were special shrines for his worship. The name of this great power is referred to in a discussion held between Mr. Brown and Akunna, an Ibo. Chukwu made the world and the other gods to serve him as his messengers. Chukwu can be approached through them. Akunna remarked, "We make sacrifices to little gods but when they fail and there is no one else to turn to, we go to Chukwu. It is right to do so.

We approach a great man through his servants but when his servants fail to help us, then we go to the last source of hope." According to Akunna, everything small or great was made by God. "The tree from which it (piece of wood) came was made by Chukwu, as indeed, all minor gods were." According to Ibo-mythology, Chukwu lived in the sky. He is origin of all things and controlled everything. The names which the Ibo gave their children expressed these beliefs.

Ibo people had much reverence for Chukwu. They did not know how to approach him but they were sure that he is spirit and those who are devoted to him must worship him in spirit. They, therefore communed with him through the spirits and ancestors.

(c) Ani—One of the chief deities of the Ibo people was Ani, the earth deity, the great mother goddess, and the spirit of fertility. Every lineage and, indeed, every homestead had a shrine dedicated to her. Ani had her own special priestesses, who played leading roles in many aspects of community life. They officiated durin

that concerned Ani and presided over all matters involving crime against the earth goddess. Their presence was vital when matters concerning incest, birth, death and burial were being discussed. The ultimate resting place for all men and women who had led a good life was in the bosom of Ani. On the other hand, all men and women who practised witchcraft or died a shameful death, including those who committed suicides had no place in Ani's abode. Usually their corpse were left unburied in the 'bad bush'.

As referred to in Chapter 5 of "Things Fall Apart" the feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth.

(d) Chi—She was a man's personal god, chi-chi was similar to the Christian concept of a guardian angel. A person's Chi followed him or her throughout life, and could be either benevolent or malignant. A person with a good Chi was always successful in his or her endeavours, while a person with a bad Chi was an unfortunate person, who would labour without reaping.

The Ibo people did not believe that a man's Chi controlled his entire destiny. No matter how 'good' his Chi was, person would achieve success only if he worked hard and led an upright life. They emphasized the importance of hard work in the saying, "If a person says "yes"? that person's Chi says "yes". In addition, the Ibo believed that diviners and other medicine men and women could intervene on behalf of an unfortunate person to change his or her malignant Chi into a benevolent one. Most private prayers, sacrifices, and invocations were directed towards chasing off misfortune and keeping oneself in a state of harmony with one's Chi.

(e) Ekwensu—According to African mythology, he was like a Satan. His prime aim was to lead people astray. Ekwensu had several servants who helped him carry out his evil thoughts. One of them was death itself. The malicious being who would visit a man on the day he enjoyed life the most.

Ekwensu used people to commit crimes against other people and would then turn around and punish the same people as served him. Ekwensu was Chukwu's principal enemy and at the same time his faithful servant. Acting on the powers bestowed on him by Chukwu, he would cause an evil deer to suffer, or die in a strange manner should a man meet with an unexpected misfortune. It was a punishment for some crime he had committed. The crime might have escaped the attention of his neighbours but not the watchful eyes of the higher forces. Until a sinner atoned for a transgression he might not even remember committing he remained in a state of conflict with the higher forces, who would punish him continuously. When a person felt disturbed by certain inexplicable misfortunes, he would approach a diviner, who might recommend that the unseen forces be propitiated. Fear of unconsciously offending the higher beings was responsible for the large number of propitiation rites.

The Ibo also approached the higher forces when they wanted special favours. Should a family want to have many children, it would approach a diviner who might recommend some sacrificial offerings. Sacrifice was an important element in Ibo religious ceremony.

Things Fall Apart : Historical Perspective

Tribal Society: - Things Fall Apart was published in 1958 just prior to Nigerian independence, but it depicts pre-colonial Africa. Achebe felt it was important to portray Nigerians as they really were-not just provide a shallow description of them as other authors had. The story takes place in the typical tribal village of Umuofia, where the inhabitants (whom Achebe calls the Ibo, but who are also known as the Igbo) practice rituals common to their native traditions.

The Ibo worshipped gods who protect, advise, and chastise them and who are represented by priests and priestesses within the clan. For example, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves grants knowledge and wisdom to those who are brave enough to consult him. No one has ever seen the Oracle except his priestess, who is an Ibo woman but who has special powers of her own. Not only did the gods advise the Ibo on community matters, but also they guided individuals. Each person had a personal god, or chi, that directed his or her actions. A strong chi meant a strong person; people with weak chis were pitied. Each man kept a separate hut, or shrine, where he stored the symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits.

A hunting and gathering society, the Ibo existed on vegetables, with yams as the primary crop. Yams were so important to them that the Ibo celebrated each new year with the Feast of the New Yam. This festival thanked Ani, the earth goddess and source of all fertility. The Ibo prepared for days for the festival, and the celebration itself lasted for two days. Yams also played a part in determining a man's status in the tribe-the more yams a man has, the higher his status. Trade with other villages was facilitated by small seashells called cowries which were used as a form of currency.

Within the village, people were grouped according to families, with the eldest man in the family having the most power. On matters affecting the whole village, an assembly of adult men debated courses of action, and men could influence these assemblies by purchasing "titles" from the tribal elders. This system encouraged hard work and the spread of wealth. People who transgressed against the laws and customs of the village had to confront the egwugwu, an assembly of tribesmen masked as spirits, who would settle disputes and hand out punishment. Individual villages also attained various degrees of political status. In the novel, other tribes respect and fear Umuofia. They believe that Umuofia's magic is powerful and that the village's war-medicine, or agadi-nwayi, is particularly potent. Neighboring clans always try to settle disputes peacefully with Umuofia to avoid having to war with them.

Christianity and Colonization: - While Christianity spread across north and south Africa as early as the late fifteenth century, Christianity took its strongest hold when the majority of the missionaries arrived in the late 1800s. After centuries of taking slaves out of Africa, Britain had outlawed the slave trade and now saw the continent as ripe for

colonization. Missionaries sent to convert the local population were often the first settlers. They believed they could atone for the horrors of slavery by saving the souls of Africans.

At first, Africans were mistrustful of European Christians, and took advantage of the education the missionaries provided without converting. Individuals who had no power under the current tribal order, however, soon converted; in the novel, the missionaries who come to Umuofia convert only the weaker tribesmen, or efulefu. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. When the mission and its converts accepted even the outcasts of the clan, the missionaries' ranks grew. Eventually, some of the more important tribesmen would convert. As the mission expanded, the clan divided, discontent simmered, and conflicts arose.

English Bureaucrats and Colonization: - After the arrival of the British, when conflicts came up between villages the white government would intervene instead of allowing villagers to settle them themselves. In the novel, a white District Commissioner brings with him court messengers whose duty it is to bring in people who break the white man's law. The messengers, called "Ashy-Buttocks" for the ash-colored shorts they wear, are hated for their high-handed attitudes. These messengers and interpreters were often African Christian converts who looked down on tribesmen who still followed traditional customs. If violence involved any white missionaries or bureaucrats, British soldiers would often slaughter whole villages instead of seeking and punishing guilty individuals. The British passed an ordinance in 1912 that legalized this practice, and during an uprising in 1915, British troops killed more than forty natives in retaliation for one dead and one wounded British soldier.

One of the most important results of Europe's colonization of Africa was the division of Africa into at least fifty nation-states. Rather than being a part of a society determined by common language and livelihood, Africans lived according to political boundaries. The divisions often split ethnic groups, leading to tension and sometimes violence. The cohesiveness of the traditional society was gone.

Nigerian Independence: - British colonial rule in Nigeria lasted only fifty-seven years, from 1903 to 1960. Although Nigerians had long called for self-rule, it was not until the end of World War II that England began heeding these calls. The Richards Constitution of 1946 was the first attempt to grant some native rule by bringing the diverse peoples of Nigeria under one representative government. The three regions (northern, southern and western) were brought under the administration of one legislative council composed of twenty-eight Nigerians and seventeen British officers. Regional councils, however, guaranteed some independence from the national council and forged a link between local authorities, such as tribal chiefs, and the national government. There were three major tribes (the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo) and more than eight smaller ones living in Nigeria. This diversity complicated the creation of a unified Nigeria. Between 1946 and 1960 the country went through several different constitutions, each one attempting to balance power between the regional and the national bodies of government.

On October 1, 1960, Nigeria attained full status as a sovereign state and a member of the British Commonwealth. But under the Constitution of 1960 the Queen of England was still the head of state. She remained the commander- in-chief of Nigeria's armed forces, and the Nigerian navy operated as part of Britain's Royal Navy. Nigerians felt frustrated by the implication that they were the subjects of a monarch living over 4,000 miles away. In 1963, five years after the publication of Achebe's novel, a new constitution would replace the British monarch with a Nigerian president as head of state in Nigeria.

Literary Traditions: - Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart just before Nigeria received its independence. He intended the book for audiences outside Africa; he wanted to paint a true picture of pre-colonial Africa for those people who had no direct knowledge of traditional African societies. As a result of the Nigerians' acquisition of independence, the Nigerian educational system sought to encourage a national pride through the study of Nigerian heritage. The educational system required Achebe's book in high schools throughout the English-speaking countries in Africa. The book was well received. Chinua Achebe has been recognized as "the most original African novelist writing in English," according to Charles Larson in The Emergence of African Fiction. Critics throughout the world have praised Things Fall Apart as the first African English-language classic.

Significance of the Title

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is a novel whose title bears the central massage of the work. The very title 'Things Fall Apart' foreshadows the tragedy which takes place at the end of the novel. The novel depicts the tragedy of an individual as well as the tragedy of a society. The protagonist of the novel Okonkwo who was rich and respectable at the beginning of the novel meets a tragic fate at the end of the novel. Achebe portrays how an ambitious, well known, and respected African Okonkwo's life falls apart. But when he suffers, his whole tribe also suffers. At the beginning of the novel, the Ibo society was a peaceful, organic society, but at the end of the novel it falls into pieces. Thus, the novel records not only falling apart of Okonkwo's life but also his whole society.

The Title- A Literary Allusion: - The phrase "things fall apart" is taken from the poem, "The Second Coming" by W.B Yeats, which Achebe quotes more extensively in the epigraph. Achebe's literary allusion to Yeats' poem might deepen or extend—by comparison and/or contrast—the meaning(s) of Achebe's title and his novel. The beginning four lines of the poem are referred as a preface of the novel.

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,"

"Things fall apart" can be said when something we believed would last forever, comes to an end. The title Things Fall Apart refers to the fact that without proper balance, things do fall apart. The notion of balance in the novel is an important theme throughout the

book. Beginning with the excerpt from Yeats' poem, the concept of balance is stressed as important; for without balance, order is lost. In the novel, there is a system of balance, which the Igbo culture seems but at the end of the novel the society people cannotlisten the leader, so a chaotic situation is created.

Okonkwo's Life Falls Apart: - At the beginning of the novel we see Okonkwo as a prosperous leader of the Igbo people. But the novel ends with his tragic end. Thus, we can say that the novel Things Fall Apart depicts how Okonkwo's life falls apart. Okonkwo is definitely a man of importance for his society. He is a well-known person throughout the nine villages and beyond. He is a warrior and wrestler who gains respect through his athletics. He is a fierce-free individual. He hasn't lost one fight or any battles. And for this the people of the village love him. He is also respected because of his wealth.

Okonkwo's life first begins to fall apart when he kills Ikemefuna, a prisoner who stayed at Okonkwo's home. Okonkwo considers Ikemefuna as one of his own sons. It has been decided from the oracle that Ikemefuna will be killed. Okonkwo takes part in his murder, despite warning from his friend, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." But when he hears Ikemefuna's crying, ""My father, they have killed me!" as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down." Okonkwo's fear of being weak, which is one of his tragic flaws, drives him to rashness, and in the end it contributes to his own tragedy that his own life falls apart.

Another significant incidence where Okonkwo's life falls apart was when he was thrown out of the clan for seven years. From this event, one can see that Okonkwo's hopes dreams have begun to fall apart. His hopes of being a rich and popular individual had drifted away with this disturbing incident. Okonkwo had no longer had his farm or animals. Also Okonkwo lost faith with most of his friends. This goes to show that Okonkwo lost faith with his friends, like his father lost faith with his friends. Another episode that showed the downfall in Okonkwo's life was when Nwoye, his oldest and favorite son, converted to the white mans.

Okonkwo's life finally shattered after his returning to his village where he finds that everything is changed. After the clansman burn the Church building down, the District Commissioner asks the leaders of the clan, Okonkwo among them, to go and see him for a peaceful meeting. The leaders arrive, and are quickly seized. While they are in detention waiting for the fine to be collected from their people, they are beaten severely by the court messengers and their heads are shaved. They are held in jail until the clan pays a heavy fine. Embittered and grieving for the destruction of his clan's independence, and fearing the humiliation of dying under white law, Okonkwo commits suicide and his life totally falls apart.

Igbo Society Falls Apart: - Like Okonkwo his Igbo society also falls apart. In the first part of the book we see a socially, politically and religiously organic Igbo society. But this organic society becomes divided and virtually loses all energy at the end of the book. Thus, the novel documents the falling apart of the Igbo tribe due to its own brutal rules as well as the coming of the Christian missionaries and the rule of the English government.

The Society Itself Responsible For Falling Apart: - At the beginning of the book we see that the Igbo people have a strong faith in their traditional religion. The religion of the Igbos consisted in the belief that there is a suspense God, the creator of the universe and the lesser gods. The supreme God was called Chukwu. The other gods were made by Chukwu to act his messengers so that people could approach him through them. People made sacrifices to the smaller gods, but when the failed, the people turned to Chukwu. Ancestor worship was also an equally important feature of the religion of the Ibo people. There were man superstitious ideas related with their religious belief. They believed in evil spirits and oracle. One of such Oracles is responsible for Okonkwo's sacrifice of Ikemefuna. This incident underlines the superstitious brutality of traditional Igbo society. We also find the brutality, injustice and the inhuman activities in some other rituals or rules such as – people who are affected by some severe diseases are carried on the Evil Forest to die and they do not get any burial and twain babies are thrown out in the Evil Forest just after their birth. The ultimate result of such brutality is when the people, who are dissatisfied with these rules such as- Nwoye, the mother of three twin babies, get the opportunity to change their religion they do it and the society ultimately falls apart.

Igbo Society Encounters the Colonial Masters and Falls Apart: - Prior to the coming of the white the political life of the Igbo people was also very organic and strong. They were very loyal to their political leaders. After the entrance of colonial masters, the colonial religion, mostly replaces the traditional religion. When the white man arrives, however, they ignore the Igbo's values and tries to enforce his own beliefs and religious practices. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. Like many others, Okonko's son Nwoye is also affected by the colonial religion.

The only point in the book in which the title is referenced is Chapter Twenty, when the main character, Okonkwo, and his friend, Obierika, are discussing the invasion of white men into their community. Obierika says, "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." his passage clearly ties the destruction of the Igbo people's way of life to sneaky, divisive action on the part of European missionaries and imperialists.

The colonial politics affects the Igbo society. Okonko's life is also affected by the colonial politics. The Igbo people become the victims of the colonial politics and many people die as a result of colonialism. The same things happen to Okonkwo.

The novel concludes with the end of the Igbo society and the death of the hero. In the face of the chaos caused by the incursion of Christianity, Okonkwo becomes a murderer and then hangs himself. His world has literally fallen apart, and it symbolically represents that Igbo society has fallen apart. Thus, we can say, the title of the novel, Things Fall Apart denotes its theme appropriately.

Clash of Civilizations in 'Things Fall Apart'

Things Fall Apart is an amazing novel by Chinua Achebe that illustrates the conflict occurring during the period of British colonization of Africa. Things Fall Apart explores the struggles between the old traditions of the Igbo community and the effects of Christianity on the people of different calibres within that society. The novel is told from the perspective of the native people of Ibo. The novel takes place in Umuofia, in Nigeria, in an area where their culture is indigenous to the Ibo people. In "Things Fall Apart" it seems that the African Ibo culture was strong and functional, such as in its religious beliefs and customs, government, economic, and social coherence. The order of Ibo society became interrupted and began to unravel when the white missionaries entered Africa and introduced Christianity.

The colonial religion first attacked the outcasts of the Ibo society in order to expand on the ideas of Christianity and how their belief system was not an accurate portrayal. The traditional belief system had been corrupted by the impact of the missionaries and there was encouragement of disavowing the traditional beliefs of the Ibo society. There were changes due to the entrance of the white man; it was no longer the same society that had been known to the Ibo people. The missionaries who came to Umuofia set out to reach everyone in order to convert him or her to Christianity. Kiaga approached two outcasts and told them they must shave their hair in order to let go of their heathen beliefs. The Christians even lived in the Evil Forest in order to prove that their belief system was not accurate.

The colonizers used religion as a tool of Conquest in Things Fall Apart. In the novel Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, the white men who come to Umuofia find success in conquering the village by challenging Ibo religion. Because the first white men to appear in Umuofia were missionaries, the slaughter of Ibo society began with the challenging of the highly-regarded religion of the Ibo people. The white men began their religious assault by openly denouncing the many gods worshipped by the Ibo in order to convert them to the new faith. After accomplishing this, the white men set out to prove that the Christian religion was superior to all others by defying the powers of the Ibo gods when they built their church upon the cursed ground of the Evil Forest. With the Ibo religion being proved powerless, the converts began challenging their former religion by killing the sacred python, revered by the people of Umuofia. By attacking the fundamental teachings of the natives' religion, the Christians were able to effectively conquer the Ibo people.

One of the main themes of the novel is change. It is also seen through religion. The tribe have lived for thousands of years in an untouched and unviolated existence. The arrival of the missionaries and the conversion of many to the Christian faith make it very difficult for some to cope with. Especially those who choose not to convert, and have to watch as their friends/family take a different path. The Clan has a different perception when it comes to the gods. Whereas the Christians believe in only one god, the Ibo have various gods who they worship. There is one supreme god, but they call him Chukwu because "he made all the world and the other gods." They also worship other gods such as the Oracle of the Hills, the sacred python, and the chi, (or personal god). Two of

these are animate gods, in the form of a woman and a reptile. This illustrates another difference between the two religions as the Christian's god is inanimate. The Umofians had a religion that worked out great for them, but when the white men came, they took over their religion and forced them to believe something else. Thus, the colonial religion has brought a change into the system of religion in Ibo society.

Tragedy of an individual or tragedy of society

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is a tragedy of an individual as well as the society. The protagonist of the novel, Okonko who was rich and respectable at the beginning of the novel meets a tragic fate at the end of the novel. But when he suffers, his whole tribe also suffers. At the beginning of the novel, the Ibo society was a peaceful, organic society, but at the end of the novel it falls into pieces. Thus the novel records not only the sufferings of Okonkwo but also his whole society.

At the beginning of the play we see Okonko as a prosperous leader of the Ibo people. But the novel ends with his tragic end. Thus, we can say that the novel Things fall apart is a depiction of Okonkwo's tragic fall. Okonkwo was definitely a man of importance for his society. He was a well-known person throughout the 9 villages and beyond. He was a warrior ad wrestler who gained respect through his athletics. He was a fierce-free individual. He hadn't lost one fight or any battles. And for this the people of the village loved him. He was also respected because of his wealth.

Okonkwo had three wives and many children. He was able to take care of his wives and children.But suddenly a disaster takes place in his life. He unconsciously kills the son of a man who had warned him not to kill Ikemefuna. Although the killing was an accident, Okonkwo and his family are forced before nightfall to flee to his distant native village to Manta. When they are gone his compound and his possessions are destroyed by his fellow tribesman in a ritual cleansing and purification of his sin.

When Okonkwo came back to his village he found that everything was changed. After the clansman burn the Church building down, the District Commissioner asks the leaders of the clan, Okonkwo among them, to go and see him for a peaceful meeting. The leaders arrive, and are quickly seized. While they are in detention waiting for the fine to be collected from their people, they are beaten severely by the court messengers and their heads shaved. They are held in jail until the clan pays a heavy fine.

Embittered and grieving for the destruction of his clan's independence, and fearing the humiliation of dying under white law, Okonkwo ends his life. The District Commissioner and his messengers arrive at Umuofia to find Okonkwo has hanged himself. They are asked to take down his body, since Ibo mores forbid clan members to touch it, as suicide is regarded as a ac of weakness and as attack against nature.

Like Okonkwo his Ibo society also meets a tragic fate. In the first part of the book we see a socially, politically and religiously organic Ibo society. But this organic society becomes divided and virtually loses all energy at the end of the book.

At the beginning of the book we see that the Ibo people have a strong faith in their traditional religion. The religion of the Ibos consisted in the belief that there is a suspense God, the creator of the universe and the lesser gods. The supreme God was called Chukwu. The other gods were made by Chukwu to act his messengers so that people could approach Him through them. People made sacrifices to the smaller gods, but when the failed, the people turned to Chukwu. Ancestor worship was also an equally important feature of the religion of the Ibo people. There were man superstitious ideas related with their religious belief. They believed in evil spirits and oracle. One of such Oracles is responsible for Okonkwo's sacrifice of Ikemefuna. This incident underlines the superstitious brutality of traditional Ibo society. Thus we find a very strong and extremely detailed picture of Ibo life society prior to the coming of the white man.

But later the Christianity, the colonial religion, mostly replaces the traditional religion. When the white man arrives, however, he ignores the Ibo's values and tries to enforce his own beliefs and religious practices. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. Like many others, Okonkwo's son is also affected by the colonial religion.

Prior to the coming of the white the political life of the Ibo people was also very organic and strong. They were very loyal to their political leaders.The colonial politics affects the Ibo society. Okonkwo's life is also affected by the colonial politics. The Ibo people become the victims of the colonial politics and many people die as a result of colonialism. The same things happen to him.

When conflicts came up between villages, the white government would intervene instead of allowing villagers to settle them themselves. In the novel when the white man's government has come to Umuofia, the clan is no longer free to judge its own; a district commissioner, backed by armed power, judge cases in ignorance of tribal custom.

Things Fall Apart chronicles the double tragedies of the deaths of Okonkwo, a revered warrior, and the Ibo, the tribe to which Okonkwo belongs. In literature, tragedy often describes the downfall of a great individual which is caused by a flaw in the person's character. Okonkwo's personal flaw is his unreasonable anger, and his tragedy occurs when the tribe bans him for accidentally killing a young tribesman, and he returns to find a tribe that has changed beyond recognition. The Ibo's public demise results from the destruction of one culture by another, but their tragedy is caused by their turning away from their tribal gods.

Role of Fear in Okonkwo's Life and Action

Things Fall Apart, written by Chinua Achebe, is a story of Okonkwo whose life is dominated by his fears-"the fears of failures". There are many subtle themes throughout the book Things Fall Apart. One theme that cries out over the rest is Okonkwo's, the main character, fear of weakness as seen through his childhood, his oldest son, and eventually his death. The novel is also a tragedy and Okonkwo is a tragic hero. Okonkwo's tragedy can be connected to a tragic flaw in his character. He was afraid of

being considered weak. His fear motivates him to take actions which are often unnecessary and ultimately destructive. His fear of being feminine leads him to assist in the murder of Ikemefuna whom he loved, to beat his wives, be emotionally distant from his children, and to disown his oldest son.In the end, his fear of being thought weak was his final undoing. He killed the white man's messenger because he did not want the other elders to consider him weak.

An ambitious man who has risen from nothing to a man of importance in his tribe, Okonkwo rules his family with an iron fist. The cause of being so strict and rude to his family is his fear of being considered as weak. Since his childhood, Okonkwo was ashamed of his father, "In his day he (Unoka) was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow". His father Unoka was a failure in every sense of the word. Unoka was lazy, wasteful and un-ambitious. He loved a life of pleasure without hard work. He was always in debt and was not able to take any titles in accordance with tradition. By the standard of his clan, Unoka was a coward and squanderer. When he was a child, a boy called Okonkwo's father an agbala. This word means "woman" as well as a man who has no title. His carelessness left numerous debts unpaid at his death. Ashamed of his father, Okonkwo worked hard and fought well to gain a reputation of high status and influence in his clan. He acquired three wives, one whom gave him his first son. Okonkwo's first wife, whose name is never mentioned, gave birth to his first son, Nwoye. Okonkwo saw Nwoye weak and lazy from an early age. For this, Nwoye was beaten constantly.

Okonkwo was highly demanding of his family because of his obsession not to be like his father. He mistook this behaviour as masculinity. He wished his son were a promising, manly son like his friend Obierika's son, Maduka, who was also a great fighter. One night the town of Umuofia was told that someone in Mbaino had killed one of their "daughters". The woman was OgbuefiUdo's wife. The blood price for the murder was a virgin and young man to Umuofia. The virgin was given to OgbuefiUdo as his wife. They did not know what to do with the young boy, Ikemefuna. Okonkwo was asked on behalf of the clan to take care of the boy. Secretly, Okonkwo grew fond of Ikemefuna, "Even Okonkwo himself became very fond of the boy-inwardly of course. Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger". Ikemefuna lived with Okonkwo and his family for three years until the time came when the Oracle said that Ikemefuna had to be killed. Okonkwo was warned not to have any part in killing the boy who called him father. He ignored this and upon returning sank into a deep depression which kindled the affliction inside of him. Not only the death of Ikemefuna, but also the accidental killing of Ogbuefi Ezeudu's son, which gets Okonkwo and his family exiled for seven years, aides in his depression. To atone for the killing of his clansmen's son, Okonkwo and his family were cast out of Umuofia and were forced to go live with his mother's clan in Mbanta.

In their second year a group of six missionaries travelled to Mbanta and tried to persuade the people from their false gods of wood and stone to the one true God. They captured Nwoye and he later joined their congregation. When Okonkwo was informed of the news he strangled Nwoye in anger. He questioned how he could have fathered such a weak son. At the end of the seven-year exile, Okonkwo was able to return home. However, the church had taken over Umuofia also. Nothing

refused to integrate with the new visitors. He thought that the clan's failure to remove them was "womanly". Almost happy again, Okonkwo began to accept the new Umuofia. Then the leaders of the clan, including Okonkwo, were taken for ransom by the church. Deeply angered by what was happening, Okonkwo killed one of the leaders at a meeting. The pacification of Okonkwo's clan is what depressed him. He knew his clan would not go to war. This desire to act violently all goes back to his father's lack of desire. In the end the violence settled on Okonkwo, when he hung himself.

In conclusion, all these aspects: his childhood, his first son and Ikemefuna, and his death contribute in explaining Okonkwo's fear of weakness. Okonkwo's life was controlled by his fears. He valued the success of his family and the community with his own success. If Nwoye was weak it was because he had failed as a father. The pacification of the town was a reflection of Okonkwo's failures, he thought. Not being able to control those events, Okonkwo, out of desperation or either out of the pride in his manhood or perhaps both, killed himself.

In the final analysis, Okonkwo's character is typical of tragic heroes in every tragedy. He was a great man but he was destroyed because he had a tragic flaw- fear.

Culture of the Igbo society

"Things Fall Apart" is a novel written in English by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. The novel depicts the life of Okonkwo, a leader and local wrestling champion in Umuofia - one of a fictional group of nine villages in Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo people. It focuses on his family and personal history, the customs and society of the Igbo and the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community during the late nineteenth century.

Through Achebe's use of language, it is apparent how unique the Igbo's culture is. By using traditional Igbo words, folktales, and songs into English sentences, the author shows us that African languages are comprehensible. Achebe is noted for his inclusion of proverbs from Igbo oral culture into his writing:

"The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did."

Okonkwo, explains his capacity for hard work before Nwakibie, his sons and neighbors."The Feast of the New Yam" is an occasion of joy throughout Umuofia to convey thanks to Ani, the earth goddess. Every year the Igbo people celebrate the event before the harvest commences. On the occasion, a large number of people are fed with vegetables soup, fresh yam foo-foo and so on.

In the Igbo society, a man is known for his own achievement and activeness and here a man who fails to progress beyond the junior title is a man without status in the eyes of his people and such a man is called an 'agbala' meaning a woman. The father of the protagonist is called so as he attains no title. In the behaviour of the protagonist, the sense of self-respect is traceable.

Because of the great value placed on masculinity, women are, to a great extent, inferior to men in the Ibo society. Wives' main duty is to serve their husbands. Women's value is directly tied to their ability to produce children, as shown by the fact that the birth of children is "a woman's crowning glory". Wife beating and domestic violence are very common practices. Okonkwo constantly beats his wives for some very trivial matters such as forgetting to prepare meals for him. In one occasion, Okonkwo nearly killed Ekwefi with his gun. Often women are merely properties of men who are even inferior to yams. The value of a man is measured by the number of yams and wives he has, with the former bearing more importance than the latter. When a man suits a woman, he negotiates a bride price using "a small bundle of short broomsticks," showing that women are only treated as properties and commodities in Ibo society.

They had a sharp sense of community, 'The Week of Peace' comes at the end of the carefree season and before the harvest and planting season. During the 'Week of Peace', Okonkwo breaks the peace and is punished, as is the custom, by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess. He told Okonkwo, even though his wife may have been at fault, he commits a great evil. During the 'Week of Peace' one has to live in complete peace no matter what the circumstances. The community fears that the evil he did could ruin the whole clan.

Many a superstition runs through the Igbo society as we observe regarding the twin-born babies. They believe that it is a sing of evil omen. For this reason, they cast away the twins in the 'Evil Forest' as soon as they are born. Similarly Okonkwo's father's aliment invites the same consequences and he is not buried with the traditional respect and rituals because a diseased person in the society is left in the forest to die.

The lives of the Ibo people revolve around great traditions and supreme beings. The Oracle in the mountain is greatly respected and feared by the villagers. His decisions are viewed as edicts that people who defy them will be damned. The powerful clan of Umuofia never goes to war unless its case was accepted by the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. After the Oracle decrees Ikemefuna's death, Okonkwo, despite his affection for Ikemefuna, obeys and kills Ikemefuna. When Chielo the priestess, sent for by Agbala, comes to Okonkwo's hut to get Ezinma, even the fearless Okonkwo gives way after incessantly pleading Chielo to allow Ezinma stay.

Religion has been the integral part of the Igbo society, as they believe in a supreme god, Chukwu, who has created all things and demands obedience. In "Things Fall Apart", the mask, the earth, the legends and the rituals all have significance in the history of the Igbo culture. According to Baldwin:

"Religion looms large in the life of primitive man."

First, there is the use of the mask to draw the spirit of the gods into the body of a person. A great crime in the Igbo culture is to unmask or show disrespect to the immortality of an egwugwu, which represents an ancestral spirit. Toward the end of the novel, a Christian convert unmasks and kills one of his own ancestral spirits. The clan weeps, for "it seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was

coming—its own death." They also believe in 'chi' a man personal god and many other gods and goddesses.

To conclude the discussion, it can be said that the Igbo society was much enriched but as soon as the colonisers came to their land, their society, and cultural values commenced falling apart and the old way of life gets disrupted.

Gender Roles in the Igbo Society

In the novel by Chinua Achebe, "Things Fall Apart", the Igbo people are at a watershed moment in their history and culture. The incursion of the colonizing force is changing or threatening to change almost every aspect of their society: religion, family structure, gender roles and relations, and trade, to name just a few. In "Things Fall Apart", Achebe shows how the Igbo society is changing because women, who were typically confined to the home and who had little decision-making power prior to colonialism, suddenly find themselves agents of important social exchanges through the roles they play in the trade that occurs in the market, as well as in the production of the crops that are sold at market.

The novel, "Things Fall Apart" is, at its heart, a novel about a rapidly changing culture. Because of the quick introduction of new ideas in "Things Fall Apart" from the outsiders, nearly every aspect of Igbo culture begins to change, including, rather predictably, the nature of gender relationships. Before the introduction of new cultural influences in "Things Fall Apart" the gender roles were quite standardized as was depicted both by the interactions of Okonkwo and his wives and other Igbo men and women in "Things Fall Apart". Clearly the women were given certain responsibilities and these were not mutable aspects of Igbo culture but were sedentary cultural norms. With new ideas from outside, however, the roles of women in "Things Fall Apart" and Igbo culture began to shift, bringing larger cultural implications. For example, one of the rapid cultural changes that takes place in Igbo society is apparent in terms of the harvesting of crops. While they still do not harvest yams, "a man's crop" (Achebe 22), and symbol of "manliness…[and] great[ness] (Achebe 33), the "coco-yams, beans and cassava" (Achebe 22) become increasingly important to the Igbo and their trade, despite men's clinging to the yam as an important symbol of the Igbo culture. As the result of their position in the enterprise of trading, women had more direct contact with foreigners than did the men. As this contact and their selling success increased, so too did women's influence in society and their boldness in asserting themselves and their ideas and opinions to the powerful male elders who held traditional decision-making power.

For the men in "Things Fall Apart", such a transition represented a particular threat. The main character is a very gender-role oriented male, Okonkwo, for instance, reflected on the colonial enterprise and remarked that the white man "has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 124-125). Women's growing power, conferred upon them through their status acquired in trading, contested the historical notions of gender relations, summarized in the idea that, as stated by Chinua Achebe in the book says, "No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man"

(Achebe 45). Trade, then, and women's role in this vital activity of Igbo society, changed gender dynamics, family relations, and the very concepts upon which Igbo culture was founded. Okonkwo's relationship with his late father shapes much of his violent and ambitious demeanour. He wants to rise above his father's legacy of spendthrift, indolent behaviour, which he views as weak and therefore effeminate. This association is inherent in the clan's language—the narrator mentions that the word for a man who has not taken any of the expensive, prestige-indicating titles is agbala, which also means "woman." But, for the most part, Okonkwo's idea of manliness is not the clan's. He associates masculinity with aggression and feels that anger is the only emotion that he should display. For this reason, he frequently beats his wives, even threatening to kill them from time to time. We are told that he does not think about things, and we see him act rashly and impetuously. Yet others who are in no way effeminate do not behave in this way. Obierika, unlike Okonkwo, "was a man who thought about things." Whereas Obierika refuses to accompany the men on the trip to kill Ikemefuna, Okonkwo not only volunteers to join the party that will execute his surrogate son but also violently stabs him with his machete simply because he is afraid of appearing weak.

Okonkwo's seven-year exile from his village only reinforces his notion that men are stronger than women. While in exile, he lives among the kinsmen of his motherland but resents the period in its entirety. The exile is his opportunity to get in touch with his feminine side and to acknowledge his maternal ancestors, but he keeps reminding himself that his maternal kinsmen are not as warlike and fierce as he remembers the villagers of Umuofia to be. He blames them for their preference of negotiation, compliance, and avoidance over anger and bloodshed. According to Okonkwo, his uncle Uchendu exemplifies this opposition to war mode.

Much of the traditional Igbo life presented in this novel revolves around structured gender roles. Essentially all of Igbo life is gendered, from the crops that men and women grow, to characterization of crimes. In Igbo culture, women are the weaker sex, but are also endowed with qualities that make them worthy of worship, like the ability to bear children. The dominant role for women is: first, to make a pure bride for an honourable man, second, to be a submissive wife, and third, to bear many children. The ideal man provides for his family materially and has prowess on the battlefield. The protagonist in the novel is extremely concerned with being hyper-masculine and devalues everything feminine, leaving him rather unbalanced. Much of the gender theme in the book centers around the idea of balance between masculine and feminine forces – body and mind/soul, emotionality and rationality, mother and father. If one is in imbalance, it makes the whole system haywire.

The Igbo women of Nigeria contribute their quota towards bettering the lot of Africa despite all that worked and still work against them. To these women, globalization has proven to be positive as it has not affected who they are or their traditional roles as African Women. Nigerian history is interesting in the pre-colonial age. Nigeria was a stateless society. The leaders were usually a hierarchy of elders and age groups. The occupation of Igbo women was mainly local trade, farming, pottery, fishing etc. The people actively participated in providing for their families and in the welfare of their communities. For the Igbo, sex and gender are different, while sex is biologically determined, gender is determined by role. So some womer

(masculine women) simply because of the roles they play in the society and not because of their sexual acts. Sex determined by sex organs and therefore biologically determined, determined Nwoke (man) and Nwanyi (woman). Gender on the other hand, determined by role plays, is constructed culturally and socially. That defined male/masculine as Oke and female/feminine as Nne. Early contact with the whites established legal commerce, slave trade, Christianity and education, and imposition of the "Victorian gender ethos" on Igbo women. Women's status reduced to those of children and they could not inherit, must submit to their husbands, only male heads of households, no more dual-sex political system, no more religious roles, suppression of the voice of Igbo women.

The New Gender Construct laid grounds for political, occupational, educational reforms. Sex and gender roles combined. Male meant man; and female meant woman. Men trained in a way that facilitated their taking over from the Colonial Masters. Women trained in occupations that enabled them to attend hands and feet to their families mainly their husbands and children. Occupations included seamstresses, teachers, housewives, childcare, cooking, etc. There was more advanced technology. Colonialism enabled men to delve into areas that were predominantly women's like farming, palm oil production, salt mining, etc. Also, natural resources, new jobs and migration to other places. They had a good rapport with the colonial masters and the Igbo had the majority of workers in many government offices and also occupied the highest ranks in the military. The British rule in Nigeria also made way for more educated Igbo women. There were more Igbo women in the public sectors than men. The colonial period helped the Igbo people to escape from slavery. They learnt to speak broken English and Igala languages. The people continued to serve their community and the colonial masters with new linguistic skills. Igbo Women have been able to hold up and find their place in the History of both Nigeria and Africa. They have become very active in the political, economic, and social arenas. The Igbo has produced many women lawyers, Professors, Teachers, Engineers, CEOs of businesses and enterprises, many of them have occupied different positions in the government etc. Statistically, Igbo women in the US are all educated people. The Igbo men who come here usually have first degrees or at least high school diplomas and they marry equally educated Igbo women who can easily fit in. Most Igbo women are high earners and even earn more than their husbands. Thus they contribute more in most cases to the economic development of their people.

Though a lot has changed in the social status of the Igbo woman, their roles have not changed as they continue to be wives, mothers, daughters and sisters and they continue to play their traditional roles of being their families' economists and managers both in their natal communities and communities of marriage. The Igbo women do not just lie down and bemoan themselves and their situations, they have turned so many tragedies into victories and are using globalization and its agents as strong and positive tools to advance the causes of the Igbo nation and Nigeria as a whole.

Colonialism in "Things Fall Apart"

It is undeniable that literature, aside from depicting the creative imagination of humanity, has also served to record the various things which has happened to humanity

in the course of history. Though it is known that literature has fictitious elements in it, it also quite known that literature has been able to employ certain truths about society and the world at large by the incorporating facts in its pages. Thus, while literature has managed to be about fairy tales or romantic novels and others, it has also managed to depict serious issues concerning the psychology of being a child, the characteristics of the Victorian era and even global issues like racism, capitalism and colonialism. In fact, the latter issue, which is on colonialism, is what will be explicated in this essay as to how it has affected a certain group in Africa. In the famous novel of Chinua Achebe entitled Things Fall Apart, it can be seen how colonialism has affected people and has managed to pull them apart in many directions that it even eventually destroyed relationships of families, friends and tribes. Though the novel is a work of fiction, there is a certain truth in how colonialism has indeed affected people to the point that the life of the protagonist is destroyed and resulted to his own death.

Achebe's novel can mostly be seen as a narrative on the life of a single member in an African tribe, but on a bigger and deeper perspective, the book embodies the collective situation and life of the African people at the time wherein outside forces are trying to change the traditional practices of the people. In the novel, the strong warrior by the name of Okonkwo is depicted as the protagonist and his various struggles concerning his tribe and the changing times are shown. Okonkwo is heralded as a most apt and talented farmer from the clan of Umuofia and has become quite known for having such positive and appreciated traits. However, Okonkwo is having a hard time in trying to reign in his personality as he refrains from becoming like his father while trying to keep with the traditions and culture of his people. In the end though, as the English colonizers try to teach the people regarding the "truth" on God and certain practices, Okonkwo realizes that he cannot keep up with the changing times. He takes his own life in the end as the remaining people of his clan fully embrace change and the new things that the colonizers are teaching them.

In the novel, it is quite evident that Okonkwo is the central figure. However, his life is not the central point or theme in the novel. Instead, the theme relies on how the battle of tradition versus modernization takes place in the form of the culture of Okonkwo's clan and the teachings of the English colonizers; as how Gikandi (2000) puts it:

The central theme of the novel is what happens to the values that define Okonkwo's cultural community, and his own sense of moral order, when the institutions he and fought so hard to sustain collapse in the face of European colonialism (ix).

It may be seen that European colonialism is something which is vile as it has totally destroyed the culture and traditions of a group of people which in turn destroyed their identity. However, in how Okonkwo and his tribesmen practice their tradition, it can be seen that colonialism also has good effects since it has stripped the rather inhumane and illogical practices of the people such as how they exalt cultural violence. This type of violence can be seen in certain practices they had like "ritual sacrifices, punishment for crimes, and other kinds of communal sanctioned violence" which is normal and accepted by the clan but is not entirely humane to the missionaries (Hoegberg, 1999, 69). Of all the positive effects of colonialism as appearing in the novel and more than the economic progress it brings, it is the lessening of ignorance of the cla

avenue for new knowledge and erasure of such violent cultural practices which is more poignant and more impacting.

On the other hand, colonialism has also had its negative and appalling effects by how the missionaries and the European officers have completely stripped the identity of the tribe and more than forced them to accept the new teachings while eradicating the tribe's previous teachings with the argument that such things were not true. It is not a matter of whether such traditions are true or not—what matters is that a person practices ethical customs that does not strip away the basic human right of anybody. Ironically, while colonialism wanted to put forth new knowledge on "true" faith and eradicating unlawful customs, the nature of forcing the Christian faith towards people who are reluctant to accept them can also be judged as an unlawful act.

In conclusion, there are many aspects of how colonialism can affect a certain group or certain person as how it was portrayed in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. Economically and socially, colonialism shows its effects by the growing opportunities given to people, making them more prosperous and more open to a wide avenue of profits and discovery. On the aspect of culture, religion and traditional practices, it is inevitable that those things take a complete turn for change as people would tend to be more open or forced to new knowledge and information, making them re-think on the previous things they do know and practice. These aspects in turn affect the most important facet of the person or the people which is the psychological aspect—in trying to influence how a person or the group thinks, it will pave the way and become the determiner if there would be a chance for a change to occur. The effects of colonialism can be seen in two ways as with all things in this world, as either positive or negative and it should be accepted as such. While colonialism showed that something as important to the people like tradition and culture can be erased or changed, it is undeniable that colonialism has also brought on positive changes for the people. In the end though, what matters is that it is important to not lose one's sense of identity in the process of change and still keep one's own pride in heritage, culture and tradition—while people embrace modernity, one should never forget one's history.

'Things Fall Apart' : Case against imperialism

When Chinua Achebe showed the horrors of colonial rule in 'Things Fall Apart,' the narrative easily became the African story that impinged itself on our consciousness. The novel epitomized the case against imperialism

The death of the renowned Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, has thrust one of the most popular African books in the news. Although Achebe wrote multiple books and produced several works of scholarship, 'Things Fall Apart' acted as the catalyst for his popularity, sending the Nigerian writer to the highest plateaus of academic fame. How did 'Things Fall Apart,' a book written about the Igbo people in Nigeria, become an explanatory voice for colonially oppressed societies all over Africa? The literary tenor used by Achebe to write 'Things Fall Apart,' is the first reason behind the book's popularity. Any exhaustive commentary on 'Things Fall Apart,' must recognize the book's flair for weaving Igbo words and phrases with the English language. By partly Africanizing the English language

to tell an African story, Achebe was able to show a pre-colonial Igbo society equipped with the ability for self-rule. Through the book's main character, Okonkwo, Achebe showed how pre-colonial Igbo society dealt with crime and punishment. When Okonkwo committed what could be termed in today's legal systems as manslaughter, the response from the oracles at Umuofia was swift and judicious. Once it became clear that Okonkwo's accidentally-discharged gun was responsible for killing a citizen of the land, the oracles pronounced a verdict, which ordered Okonkwo's seven-year exile from the land he loved. Despite his enormous stature in Igbo society, Okonkwo was subjected to the rule of law through a cultural edict, forcing a seemingly untouchable man into seven anguishing years of exile.

Depiction of a politically organised people: - By the time Okonkwo served his seven year sentence in banishment, Umuofia-his beloved land was already chafing under the assault of imperialism. European mercenaries, deceptively casting themselves as 'missionaries,'were already in Umuofia to carry out a frontal assault on the political, cultural and social institutions which held Okonkwo's people together. The tragic story of Ikemefuna, which revealed the truest depths of Okonkwo's compulsive feelings of insecurity, also showed us another feature of Igbo society. Contrary to racist falsities, most of which opine that pre-colonial African societies were clusters of disorganized tribes, Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' proved otherwise. Governance and conflict-resolution worked in tandem in Okonkwo's Umuofia. When the land of Umuofia felt offended by the killing of its citizen in a neighbouring jurisdiction, the young Ikemefuna was handed over—through an emissary - to the people of Umuofia as a symbol peace. Throughout his short lifespan, the young Ikemefuna served as a conciliatory symbol from the clan which sued for peace. Indeed, Ikemefuna's presence in Okonkwo's household was seen in Umuofia as a gesture of peace. There were times when the people of Umuofia waged war, but only after the failure of pacifism. Similarly, Europeans—from the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century to the emergence of Nazi Germany in the last century—did go to war on multiple occasions when conflict-resolution proved futile. Despite all the bloody episodes in its history, imperial Europe did justify the conquest of Africa by postulating that 'civilization' is an exclusive, Western virtue! 'Things Fall Apart' is both a refutation of, and a counterblast to, the racist theories used to demean pre-colonial Africa as a heathenish land without God or government! Chinua Achebe successfully showed that before things literally fell apart, Africans lived under various systems of government overseen by the rule of law.

The multiple faces of 'Things Fall Apart': - Apart from its utility as an African response to European imperialism, 'Things Fall Apart' has other uses in academia. The book has proven itself as a work of scholarship usable in multiple, academic disciplines. Prescribed in some African countries as a literature book, 'Things Fall Apart' has also been used in American universities as a sociology book. Additionally, "Things Fall Apart" can lend itself to the voracity of a historian because book deals with the political, cultural and social developments of a people, whose history was perverted by foreigners.

Sociologically speaking, 'Things Fall Apart' deals with the behavioural patterns of a society that suffered a civilizational eclipse when attacked from outside. Lastly, 'Things Fall Apart' has been internationally used as a literature textbook because its European and African characters have stirred a lot of pensiveness among

Europeans have spent centuries, trying to justify their uninvited presence in Africa. With its sociological teachings, 'Things Fall Apart' can be used to ask a specific question: Why did Europeans force their so-called "civilizing mission" on a people who were readily spiritual and culturally sure of themselves? Even today, in the twenty-first century, the colonial rampages seen in 'Things Fall Apart," continue in several guises, mostly through Western agencies like the IMF and international trade, which has been booby-trapped enough to be called 'unfair trade.' There is a reason why things have fallen apart in Africa: a rape victim—psychologists say—could live with the trauma of defilement for an endlessly long time! When the infliction of horror is both physical and psychological, the ensuing trauma can be eternally destabilizing. Little wonder the subversive presence of Europeans in Umuofia, disoriented Okonkwo so much that he committed suicide. Today's African countries are a bigger representation of Okonkwo's Umuofia, where normalcy was replaced with the chaos unleashed by European colonialists.

The destructiveness of imperialism: - Colonial rule lasted well over a century in some African countries. Britain pompously took over Sierra Leone and kept the country as a personal property for at least 150 years! Colonial rule was very thorough in its destruction of Africa, both from a psychological and socio-economic perspective. Land-seizures and the total usurpation of African authority are few of the horrors committed in Africa by colonial Europe. By the time Europeans pulled out of Africa in the 1960s, the damage was already done. After a century of colonial degradation, the skills needed to run a modern, nation-state, became dangerously scarce in the newly-independent African States. Portuguese colonial rule, for example, proved so damaging that Africans were NOT allowed to acquire any skills other than those needed to make them serve as cooks and servants. When Portugal grudgingly pulled out of Angola in 1975, the newly-independent Angolan state staggered with incompetence, nervously searching for teachers, doctors and the managerial competence needed to run a country. Colonial rule was the crime that came close to enslaving the African all over again. When Chinua Achebe showed the horrors of colonial rule in 'Things Fall Apart,' the narrative easily became the African story that impinged itself on our consciousness. Chinua Achebe has passed onto the land of our silent ones. However, the African story he told in 'Things Fall Apart,' will always remain piercingly loud.

Okonkwo as a tragic hero in "Things Fall Apart"

In Chinua Achebe's novel "Things Fall Apart" Okonkwo is a tragic hero. Aristotle's Poetics defines a Tragic Hero as a good man of high status who displays a tragic flaw 'hamartia' and experiences a dramatic reversal 'peripeteia', as well as an intense moment of recognition 'anagnorisis'. Okonkwo is a leader and hardworking member of the Igbo community of Umuofia whose tragic flaw is his great fear of weakness and failure. Okonkwo's fall from grace in the Igbo community and eventual suicide, makes Okonkwo a tragic hero by Aristotle's definition.

Okonkwo is a man of action, a man of war and a member of high status in the Igbo village. He holds the prominent position of village clansman, due to the fact that, he had shown incredible prowess in two intertribal wars. Okonkwo's hard work had made him a wealthy farmer and a recognized individual amongst the nine villages of Umuofia and

beyond. Okonkwo’s tragic flaw is not that he was afraid of work, but rather his fear of weakness and failure that stems from his father’s, Unoka, unproductive life and disgraceful death.

***“...his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness.......
It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself,
lest he should be found to resemble his father.”***

Okonkwo’s father is a lazy, carefree man whom has a reputation of being poor and his wife and children have just barely enough to eat... they swear never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. Unoka has never taught Okonkwo what is right and wrong, and as a result Okonkwo has to interpret how to be a good man. Okonkwo’s self-interpretation leads him to conclude that a good man is someone who is the exact opposite of his father and therefore anything that his father does is weak and unnecessary.

Okonkwo’s fear leads him to treat members of his family harshly, in particular his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo often wonders how he, a man of great strength and work ethic, could have had a son who is degenerate and effeminate. Okonkwo things that,

"No matter how prosperous a man was,if he was unable to rule his women and his children ... he was not really a man"

Okonkwo wrestles with his fear that any sign of weakness will cause him to lose control of his family, position in the village, and even himself. Like many heroes of classical tragedy, Okonkwo’s tragic flaw, fear, also makes him excessively proud. Okonkwo’s downfall is a result of the changes created by the coming of the British Colonisers to Igbo. The introduction of the Colonisers into the novel causes Okonkwo’s tragic flaw to be exacerbated. Okonkwo construes change as weakness, and as a result of his interpretation, Okonkwo only knows how to react to change through anger and strength. He derives great satisfaction, “hubris” or proud arrogance, from the fact that he is a traditional, self-made man and thinks that to change would mean submitting to an outside force (Christianity).

Following Okonkwo’s seven year exile, the village Okonkwo once knew has changed due to the influence of Christianity and the influence of the British missionaries and officers. Okonkwo’s initial reaction is to arm the clan against the Colonisers and drive the British people out of Igbo.

“He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (152).

Okonkwo has always used his strength and courage to protect the community from destabilizing forces, and as Okonkwo is a traditional man, the introduction of Christianity poses a threat to all the values, morals and beliefs he sought to protect. Okonkwo resists change at every step and instead resorts to violence toward anything he perceived as a threat to his culture or values.

Okonkwo's arrogant pride makes him believe that the clan leaders would eventually reunite the clan and drive the British Colonisers out of Umuofia. Hoping that the clan will follow his lead, Okonkwo beheads a messenger of the British who is sent to break up a village meeting regarding the possibility of going to war. However, the clan instead of following Okonkwo's symbolic action is shocked by Okonkwo's brutality. Okonkwo recognizes ("anagnorisis") that Umuofia would not go to war, because the clan "had broken into tumult instead of action". Okonkwo knows that he must now face his disgrace alone.

The Igbo culture had made Okonkwo a hero, but the Igbo culture changed with the coming of the British Colonisers. Okonkwo, a hero, would rather die than be humiliated by his enemies and by committing suicide Okonkwo prevented the European Colonisers from getting revenge. Aristotle's statement, "Man, when perfect, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all", embodies the rise and fall of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's novel. Okonkwo, like many tragic heroes before him, maybe a hero but his tragic flaw prevents him from achieving true greatness as a human being.

Use of Language in Things Fall Apart

Writers in Third World countries that were formerly colonies of European nations debate among themselves about their duty to write in their native language rather than in the language of their former colonizer. Some of these writers argue that writing in their native language is imperative because cultural subtleties and meanings are lost in translation. For these writers, a "foreign" language can never fully describe their culture.

Choosing a Language: - Achebe maintains the opposite view. In a 1966 essay reprinted in his book Morning Yet on Creation Day, he says that, by using English, he presents "a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a world-wide language." He recommends that the African writer use English "in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. [The writer] should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience." Achebe accomplishes this goal by innovatively introducing Igbo language, proverbs, metaphors, speech rhythms, and ideas into a novel written in English.

Achebe agrees, however, with many of his fellow African writers on one point: The African writer must write for a social purpose. In contrast to Western writers and artists who create art for art's sake, many African writers create works with one mission in mind — to re-establish their own national culture in the postcolonial era. In a 1964 statement, also published in Morning Yet on Creation Day, Achebe comments that

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans. . . . their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, . . . they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain.

To further his aim of disseminating African works to a non-African audience, Achebe became the founding editor for a series on African literature — the African Writers Series — for the publishing firm Heinemann.

The Use of English: - Achebe presents the complexities and depths of an African culture to readers of other cultures as well as to readers of his own culture. By using English — in which he has been proficient since childhood — he reaches many more readers and has a much greater literary impact than he would by writing in a language such as Igbo. Writers who write in their native language must eventually allow their works to be translated, often into English, so readers outside the culture can learn about it.

Yet by using English, Achebe faces a problem. How can he present the African heritage and culture in a language that can never describe it adequately? Indeed, one of the primary tasks of Things Fall Apart is to confront this lack of understanding between the Igbo culture and the colonialist culture. In the novel, the Igbo ask how the white man can call Igbo customs bad when he does not even speak the Igbo language. An understanding of Igbo culture can only be possible when the outsider can relate to the Igbo language and terminology.

Achebe solves this problem by incorporating elements of the Igbo language into his novel. By incorporating Igbo words, rhythms, language, and concepts into an English text about his culture, Achebe goes a long way to bridge a cultural divide.

The Igbo vocabulary is merged into the text almost seamlessly so the reader understands the meaning of most Igbo words by their context. Can any attentive reader of Things Fall Apart remain unfamiliar with words and concepts represented by chi, egwugwu, ogbanje, and obi? Such Igbo terms as chi and ogbanje are essentially untranslatable, but by using them in the context of his story, Achebe helps the non-Igbo reader identify with and relate to this complex Igbo culture.

Chi, for example, represents a significant, complex Igbo concept that Achebe repeatedly refers to by illustrating the concept in various contexts throughout the story. Achebe translates chi as personal god when he first mentions Unoka's bad fortune. As the book progresses, it gradually picks up other nuances. As discussed in the Analysis section for Chapter 3, the chi concept is more complex than a personal deity or even fate, another frequently used synonym. Chi suggests elements of the Hindu concept of karma, the concept of the soul in some Christian denominations, and the concept of individuality in some mystical philosophies. The understanding of chi and its significance in Igbo culture grows as one progresses through the book.

Another example of Achebe's incorporation of Igbo elements is his frequent reference to traditional Igbo proverbs and tales. These particular elements give Things Fall Apart an authentic African voice. The Igbo culture is fundamentally an oral one — that is, "Among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Chapter1). To provide an authentic feel for Igbo culture would be impossible without also allowing the proverbs to play a significant role in the novel. And despite the foreign origin of these proverbs and tale

relate very well to many of them. They are woven smoothly into their context and require only occasional explanation or elaboration. These proverbs and tales are, in fact, quite similar in spirit to Western sayings and fables.

Modern-day readers of this novel not only relate easily to traditional proverbs and tales but also sympathize with the problems of Okonkwo, Nwoye, and other characters. Achebe has skillfully developed his characters, and even though they live in a different era and a very different culture, one can readily understand their motivations and their feelings because they are universal and timeless.

Speech patterns and rhythms are occasionally used to represent moments of high emotion and tension. Consider the sound of the drums in the night in Chapter 13 (go-di-di-go-go-di-go); the call repeated several times to unite a gathering followed by its group response, first described in Chapter 2 (Umuofia kwenu. . .Yaa!); the agonized call of the priestess seeking Ezinma in Chapter 11 (Agbala do-o-o-o!); the repetitious pattern of questions and answers in the isa-ifi marriage ritual in Chapter14; the long narrated tale of Tortoise in Chapter 11; and the excerpts from songs in several chapters.

Achebe adds another twist in his creative use of language by incorporating a few examples of Pidgin English. Pidgin is a simplified form of language used for communicating between groups of people who normally speak different languages. Achebe uses only a few Pidgin words or phrases — tie-tie (to tie); kotma (a crude form of court messenger); and Yes, sah — just enough to suggest that a form of Pidgin English was being established. As colonialists, the British were adept at installing Pidgin English in their new colonies. Unfortunately, Pidgin sometimes takes on characteristics of master-servant communication; it can sound patronizing on the one hand, and subservient on the other. Furthermore, using the simplified language can become an easy excuse for not learning the standard languages for which it substitutes.

Achebe's use of Igbo language, speech patterns, proverbs, and richly drawn characters creates an authentic African story that effectively bridges the cultural and historical gap between the reader and the Igbo. Things Fall Apart is a groundbreaking work for many reasons, but particularly because Achebe's controlled use of the Igbo language in an English novel extends the boundaries of what is considered English fiction. Achebe's introduction of new forms and language into a traditional (Western) narrative structure to communicate unique African experiences forever changed the definition of world literature.

Pronunciation of Igbo Names and Words: - Like Chinese, the Igbo language is a tonal one; that is, differences in the actual voice pitch and the rise or fall of a word or phrase can produce different meanings. In Chapter 16, for example, Achebe describes how the missionary's translator, though an Igbo, cannot pronounce the Mbanto Igbo dialect: "Instead of saying 'myself' he always said 'my buttocks.'" (The form k means strength while k means buttocks.)

Igbo names usually represent meanings — often entire ideas. Some names reflect the qualities that a parent wishes to bestow on a child; for example, Ikemefuna means my power should not be dispersed. Other names reflect the time, area

circumstances to which a child is born; for example, Okoye means man born on Oye Day, the second day of the Igbo week. And Igbo parents also give names to honour someone or something else; for instance, Nneka means mother is supreme.

Prior to Nigerian independence in 1960, the spelling of Igbo words was not standardized. Thus the word Igbo is written as Ibo, the pre-1960 spelling throughout Things Fall Apart. The new spellings reflect a more accurate understanding and pronunciation of Igbo words. The List of Characters includes a pronunciation that uses equivalent English syllables for most of the main characters' names.

To The Lighthouse

Twentieth Century Novel

The Novel as the Modern Epic
The stream of Consciousness Novel
The modern Psychological Novel

Introduction: Modern novels have taken place of the ancient epics. The magnitude of epic is not its volume or narrative enlargement; rather it is expansion of thought and perception. An epic reflects the conscience of an age, its life style and thought equilibrium. Thus, from Homer to Milton the epics become the carriage of social, moral and communal representation. Later, the same search of age – consciousness is done, at least tried, through the dramas. The dramas have their limitation in its time frame and dramaturgic setting. Even Shakespeare fails to cross these limitations. After many currents and cross currents of prose-lyrics become multi-faceted, many – sided, complex and abundantly rich in it astonishing variety. The modern novelists are reading the conscience of his characters through the medium of his own, and by the process the dimensional mirror of novel is reflecting an age conscience which we have already read in epics. Modern novel is truly the 'comic prose epic'. (Fielding)

Dialogism: Mikhael Bakhtin has pointed out a singular characteristic of the novel – the dialogic quality. The traditional epics compact diverse elements in life and looks upon humanity with a vaster sweep of vision. The novels, however, actively assimilate aspects of life – crisis, correlation and combination – out of which a dimensional thought is expressed. In the 19th century, Dickens and Balzac have successfully depleted the multidimensional qualities in their pragmatic fictional works.

In all these efforts there have been a giant leap into the terrain of humanism but yet the possibility of grossness looms large. The totality of the storyline seems here mechanical – a piling of facts, elements, incidents and characters. Here is no harmony, rather assimilation. Henry James thus accuses these traditional

monsters'. Thus through the passage of James, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Tomas Mann there comes an inwardness in the novel and give birth to the stream of consciousness novel.

The Stream of consciousness Technique in Fiction: A withdrawal from the external phenomena into flickering half shades of the author's private world is the basic pattern of stream of consciousness novel. It occupies with time, subjectivity, inwardness, absence of action, plot and catastrophe. The stream of consciousness novel does not adhere to the concept of reality. From the Freudian and Youngian concept here the reality lies not in the outer actions, but in the inner working of the human mind, in the inner perceptions. Consciousness is a constant flow, not jointed, and not chopped up in bits. It is the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. By this technique, the novelists try to catch the flow of life before it hardens into intellectual concepts and mechanical habits.

The novel based on this technique is mostly psychological. Emphasis lies on the individual and that too on the inner working of his mind. There is definite change in the concept of reality. There is decay of plot, decay of character. Actually the entire method of characterization is changed. The 'stream of consciousness' technique novelists record the impressions upon the mind of the character. It is the interior monologue of the character.

The modern novel is free and frank treatment of sex, love and marriage. The pre occupation of the modern novel with sex themes is very much due to the theories of psychologists like Freud and Havelock Ellis and the frustration, boredom and brutality caused by the two devastating world wars. The writers' life of Kafka, James Joyce, and Henry James rightfully exhibits this.

The novels written by Stream of Consciousness writers clearly reflect the decay of plot and there is a tendency of discontinuity instead of continuity of action. They do not particularly care about neatly finishing off a given action, following it through the fall of the curtain. In short, these novels are like incomplete sentence. The great modern novels like Ulysses by Joyce or Pilgrimages by Dorothy Richardson are still stories, but they are stories without an ending, and the characteristic modern novel is a story without an ending. Despite of these, these novels are a serious art form which is well constructed in its aesthetic unity. Henry James, Conrad, Mrs. Woolf and other novelists have given careful thought to the aesthetics of the novel and propounded their own theory.

A few notable writers of Stream of consciousness novels: Undoubtedly Dorothy Richardson is the English writer who is the pioneer in this field and who presents stream of consciousness writing at its purest. But among the other writers Mrs Woolf is notable writer whose Mrs Dalloway and To The Lighthouse are her immortal creation. Her Mrs. Dalloway is the interior monologue of Clarrisa Dalloway whose party remains a delusive notion of our culture. Clarrisa in her stream of thought finds out the hoax meaningless sociological norms and customs. The suicide of Septimus has no impact on anybody even to Dr Brads who instigated her to commit suicide. The crisis of the society haunts in this novel.

James Joyce's Ulysses is a masterpiece in this genre. The hero of the novel Leopold Bloom and his monologue of a single day in the slum of Dublin city constitut

novel. Bloom is loitering to and fro, interacts with different persons – particularly with his wife and affectionate son like youth Stephen Dedalus. Within these twenty four hours of stream of conscience the three thousand years history of European culture, creative and experimental assimilate into a harmonious whole. His other novel A Portrait also roughly defines the stream of consciousness in the opening and closing pages of the novel. The emphasis in the stream of consciousness method is on the psychic being of the characters and the associate mode is kept in the forefront of Stephen's consciousness.

Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse is an experiment towards a new method of satisfactory re-creating the reality inherent in human personality. The Pilgrimage by Dorothy Richardson is without plot, comedy – tragedy, love interest or catastrophe. Here is only Miriam Henderson, living from day to day, experiencing, feeling, and reacting to the stimuli of the outside world of people and things.

Conclusion: The stream of Conscience is also called the psychological novel, the novel of subjectivity, the novel of the interior monologue. Enriched by the philosophic thinkers like James, Freud, Jung, Adler and Bergson, the novelists like Proust, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf preoccupy with the subjectivity, inwardness, absence of plot and action and to the deepest recesses of the human psychology. But above all these novels as an organized symmetry have tried to rich the 'dialogism' and 'carnivalesque' – the two true essence of any epic writing.

Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was born on January 25, 1882, a descendant of one of Victorian England's most prestigious literary families. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was the editor of the Dictionary of National Biography and was married to the daughter of the writer William Thackeray. Woolf grew up among the most important and influential British intellectuals of her time and received free rein to explore her father's library. Her personal connections and abundant talent soon opened doors for her. Woolf wrote that she found herself in "a position where it was easier on the whole to be eminent than obscure." Almost from the beginning, her life was a precarious balance of extraordinary success and mental instability.

As a young woman, Woolf wrote for the prestigious Times Literary Supplement, and as an adult she quickly found herself at the centre of England's most important literary community. Known as the "Bloomsbury Group" after the section of London in which its members lived, this group of writers, artists, and philosophers emphasized nonconformity, aesthetic pleasure, and intellectual freedom, and included such luminaries as the painter Lytton Strachey, the novelist E. M. Forster, the composer Benjamin Britten, and the economist John Maynard Keynes. Working among such an inspirational group of peers and possessing an incredible talent in her own right, Woolf published her most famous novels by the mid-1920s, including The Voyage Out, Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando, and To the Lighthouse. With these works she reached the pinnacle of her profession.

Woolf's life was equally dominated by mental illness. Her parents died when she was young—her mother in 1895 and her father in 1904—and she was prone to intense, terrible headaches and emotional breakdowns. After her father's death, she attempted

suicide, throwing herself out a window. Though she married Leonard Woolf in 1912 and loved him deeply, she was not entirely satisfied romantically or sexually. For years she sustained an intimate relationship with the novelist Vita Sackville-West. Late in life, Woolf became terrified by the idea that another nervous breakdown was close at hand, one from which she would not recover. On March 28, 1941, she wrote her husband a note stating that she did not wish to spoil his life by going mad. She then drowned herself in the River Ouse.

Woolf's writing bears the mark of her literary pedigree as well as her struggle to find meaning in her own unsteady existence. Written in a poised, understated, and elegant style, her work examines the structures of human life, from the nature of relationships to the experience of time. Yet her writing also addresses issues relevant to her era and literary circle. Throughout her work she celebrates and analyses the Bloomsbury values of aestheticism, feminism, and independence. Moreover, her stream-of-consciousness style was influenced by, and responded to, the work of the French thinker Henri Bergson and the novelists Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

This style allows the subjective mental processes of Woolf's characters to determine the objective content of her narrative. In To the Lighthouse (1927), one of her most experimental works, the passage of time, for example, is modulated by the consciousness of the characters rather than by the clock. The events of a single afternoon constitute over half the book, while the events of the following ten years are compressed into a few dozen pages. Many readers of To the Lighthouse, especially those who are not versed in the traditions of modernist fiction, find the novel strange and difficult. Its language is dense and the structure amorphous. Compared with the plot-driven Victorian novels that came before it, To the Lighthouse seems to have little in the way of action. Indeed, almost all of the events take place in the characters' minds.

Although To the Lighthouse is a radical departure from the nineteenth-century novel, it is, like its more traditional counterparts, intimately interested in developing characters and advancing both plot and themes. Woolf's experimentation has much to do with the time in which she lived: the turn of the century was marked by bold scientific developments. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution undermined an unquestioned faith in God that was, until that point, nearly universal, while the rise of psychoanalysis, a movement led by Sigmund Freud, introduced the idea of an unconscious mind. Such innovation in ways of scientific thinking had great influence on the styles and concerns of contemporary artists and writers like those in the Bloomsbury Group. To the Lighthouse exemplifies Woolf's style and many of her concerns as a novelist. With its characters based on her own parents and siblings, it is certainly her most autobiographical fictional statement, and in the characters of Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily Briscoe, Woolf offers some of her most penetrating explorations of the workings of the human consciousness as it perceives and analyses, feels and interacts.

About To the Lighthouse

To the Lighthouse (1927) is widely considered one of the most important works of the twentieth century. With this ambitious novel, Woolf established herself as one of the leading writers of modernism. The novel develops innovative literary techniques to reveal women's experience and to provide an alternative to male-dominated views of

reality. On the surface, the novel tells the story of the Ramsay family and the guests who come to stay with them at their vacation home on the Hebrides Islands in Scotland. At its heart, however, the novel is a meditation on time and how humans reckon with its relentless passage.

The novel was written and published during one of the most dense and impressive periods of development in English literary history. The modernist period gave rise to many ground-breaking and enduring masterworks, such as T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, and James Joyce's Ulysses. This was also a period of rapid intellectual achievement, and Woolf's emphasis on consciousness and a character's inner lives is consistent with the scientific and psychological ideas posited at the time. As Sigmund Freud explored theories of consciousness and sub consciousness, Virginia Woolf wrote a novel that focuses not on the events of the external world but on the richness and complexity of mental interiority.

Thus, to convey this sense of human consciousness, Woolf's narrative departs from the traditional plot-driven structure as it is often expressed by an objective, third-party narrative. Instead she incorporates highly innovative literary devices to capture the thought process, using in particular stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse. Given that the novel is defined by subjectivity, it focuses on the subjectivity of reality, experience, and time. The novel also represents the interweaving of various perspectives and individual trains of thought that, strung together, constitute a cohesive whole.

Character List

Mrs. Ramsay: - Mrs. Ramsay is the loving and hospitable wife of Mr. Ramsay. She is highly domestic, focusing on her roles as mother and wife. She deeply admires her husband, although she cannot tell him that she loves him. She is responsible and strong, but she dies unexpectedly in her fifties.

Mr. Ramsay: - Mr. Ramsay is dominated by rationality and scientific reason. He is in search of truth and greatness, and he fears that he is rather inadequate for not achieving his aims. Neither affectionate nor sentimental, he nevertheless inspires admiration in his wife, although she becomes irritated with his insensitivity.

Lily Briscoe: - A young, unmarried painter friend of the Ramsays. She is extremely fond of Mrs. Ramsay and feels a profound sense of emptiness after she dies. She begins a portrait at the beginning of the novel that she cannot finish until the end, ten years later, when the Ramsays reach the Lighthouse.

James Ramsay: - The youngest Ramsay child, James is six years old when the book begins. He adores his mother and is violently resentful of his father. He enjoys cutting images out of magazines and wants desperately to go to the Lighthouse when he is young.

Paul Rayley: - A young friend of the Ramsays, visiting them at their summer home, Paul proposes to Minta Doyle on the beach as Mrs. Ramsay wished.

Minta Doyle: - A young woman visiting the Ramsays at their summer home, Minta accepts Paul Rayley's marriage proposal.

Charles Tansley: - An odious atheist whom none of the Ramsays particularly like, Charles is one of Mr. Ramsay's philosophy pupils. He is insulting and chauvinistic, trying to discourage Lily from painting. He is often concerned with the affairs and status of others and is very self-centred. He finds Mrs. Ramsay quite beautiful and is proud to be seen walking with her.

William Bankes: - An old friend of the Ramsays visiting their summer home, William is a botanist. He is a gentle man of about 60, and Mrs. Ramsay hopes that he will marry Lily Briscoe--making thinly veiled attempts at getting them together. He and Lily remain close friends, and she trusts him deeply.

Augustus Carmichael: - An unhappy poet who takes opium and achieves little success until after World War I. Because of his controlling wife, he is not fond of Mrs. Ramsay.

Andrew Ramsay: - The oldest son of the Ramsays, Andrew accompanies Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle on their engagement walk to the beach. He is a gifted mathematician, but he dies fighting in World War I.

Jasper Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay sons. He enjoys shooting birds, which disturbs his mother, while Mr. Ramsay thinks that doing so is normal for a boy of his age.

Roger Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay sons, Roger is adventurous and most similar to his sister, Nancy.

Prue Ramsay: - Prue is the oldest of the Ramsays' daughters, and her mother expects her to be an exceptional beauty when she grows up. Although Prue marries, she dies during the following summer of an illness related to childbirth.

Rose Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay daughters, Rose is aesthetically inclined. She enjoys making beautiful arrangements and choosing her mother's jewelry.

Nancy Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay daughters, Nancy is adventurous and independent, secretly hoping for a life much different from her mother's. She does not seem domestic. She accompanies Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle on their engagement walk to the beach.

Cam Ramsay: - Cam is the Ramsays' youngest daughter. She is an energetic and mischievous child, and Mrs. Ramsay laments that she must grow up and suffer. Cam sails with James and Mr. Ramsay to the Lighthouse in the final section of the novel.

Mrs. McNab: - The witless and leering housekeeper, Mrs. McNab is asked to enter the Ramsays' home after years of disuse to open the windows and dust the bedrooms.

Macalister: - A fisherman friend who accompanies the Ramsays to the Lighthouse.

Macalister's boy: - The fisherman's son who rows the Ramsays to the Lightl

Badger: - The Ramsays' toothless dog.

Kennedy: - The Ramsays' lazy gardener.

Mrs. Bast: - A woman who comes to help Mrs. McNab clean the Ramsays' summer home during the "Time Passes" interlude.

George Bast: - Mrs. Bast's son, who also helps clean the Ramsays' house.

Mrs. Beckwith: - A visitor to the Ramsay house at the Lighthouse.

To The Lighthouse : Plot Overview

To the Lighthouse is divided into three sections: “The Window,” “Time Passes,” and “The Lighthouse.” Each section is fragmented into stream-of-consciousness contributions from various narrators.

“The Window” opens just before the start of World War I. Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay bring their eight children to their summer home in the Hebrides (a group of islands west of Scotland). Across the bay from their house stands a large lighthouse. Six-year-old James Ramsay wants desperately to go to the lighthouse, and Mrs. Ramsay tells him that they will go the next day if the weather permits. James reacts gleefully, but Mr. Ramsay tells him coldly that the weather looks to be foul. James resents his father and believes that he enjoys being cruel to James and his siblings.

The Ramsays host a number of guests, including the dour Charles Tansley, who admires Mr. Ramsay’s work as a metaphysical philosopher. Also at the house is Lily Briscoe, a young painter who begins a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay wants Lily to marry William Bankes, an old friend of the Ramsays, but Lily resolves to remain single. Mrs. Ramsay does manage to arrange another marriage, however, between Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, two of their acquaintances.

During the course of the afternoon, Paul proposes to Minta, Lily begins her painting, Mrs. Ramsay soothes the resentful James, and Mr. Ramsay frets over his shortcomings as a philosopher, periodically turning to Mrs. Ramsay for comfort. That evening, the Ramsays host a seemingly ill-fated dinner party. Paul and Minta are late returning from their walk on the beach with two of the Ramsays’ children. Lily bristles at outspoken comments made by Charles Tansley, who suggests that women can neither paint nor write. Mr. Ramsay reacts rudely when Augustus Carmichael, a poet, asks for a second plate of soup. As the night draws on, however, these missteps right themselves, and the guests come together to make a memorable evening.

The joy, however, like the party itself, cannot last, and as Mrs. Ramsay leaves her guests in the dining room, she reflects that the event has already slipped into the past. Later, she joins her husband in the parlor. The couple sits quietly together, until Mr. Ramsay’s characteristic insecurities interrupt their peace. He wants his wife to tell him that she loves him. Mrs. Ramsay is not one to make such pronouncements, but she concedes to his point made earlier in the day that the weather will be too rough for a trip

to the lighthouse the next day. Mr. Ramsay thus knows that Mrs. Ramsay loves him. Night falls, and one night quickly becomes another.

Time passes more quickly as the novel enters the "Time Passes" segment. War breaks out across Europe. Mrs. Ramsay dies suddenly one night. Andrew Ramsay, her oldest son, is killed in battle, and his sister Prue dies from an illness related to childbirth. The family no longer vacations at its summerhouse, which falls into a state of disrepair: weeds take over the garden and spiders nest in the house. Ten years pass before the family returns. Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, employs a few other women to help set the house in order. They rescue the house from oblivion and decay, and everything is in order when Lily Briscoe returns.

In "The Lighthouse" section, time returns to the slow detail of shifting points of view, similar in style to "The Window." Mr. Ramsay declares that he and James and Cam, one of his daughters, will journey to the lighthouse. On the morning of the voyage, delays throw him into a fit of temper. He appeals to Lily for sympathy, but, unlike Mrs. Ramsay, she is unable to provide him with what he needs. The Ramsays set off, and Lily takes her place on the lawn, determined to complete a painting she started but abandoned on her last visit. James and Cam bristle at their father's blustery behavior and are embarrassed by his constant self-pity. Still, as the boat reaches its destination, the children feel a fondness for him. Even James, whose skill as a sailor Mr. Ramsay praises, experiences a moment of connection with his father, though James so willfully resents him. Across the bay, Lily puts the finishing touch on her painting. She makes a definitive stroke on the canvas and puts her brush down, finally having achieved her vision.

"To the Lighthouse" : Historical Context

Victorian to Modern: - The period of Virginia Woolf's life spanned the transition from the Victorian to the modern world. In the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution had made Britain the 'factory to the world' and solidified its economic power. The British Empire was at the height of its power and influence. In people's daily lives the church occupied a central place, and class positions and gender roles seemed fixed. Yet between the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, when Woolf was 19, and the end of the Second World War, almost every aspect of British life changed. The impact of two world wars, prolonged economic depression in the 1930s, and the rise of the USA and the Soviet Union as rival world powers meant that by the latter half of the twentieth century, Britain had lost its global pre-eminence, and witnessed radical social, cultural, and political changes.

When Virginia Woolf was born in 1882, horses and carriages rattled past her home in Kensington; by the time she died in 1941, formations of jet aircraft roared overhead and threatened oblivion from the air. Less deadly, but no less revolutionary, the radio, the telephone and the automobile altered the rhythms and expectations of everyday life. The expansion of the voting franchise and increases in leisure time for workers meant that class divisions were weakened, and more of the population than ever before had a voice in politics and a share of cultural life. The creation of a welfare state in 1945 represented to many in Britain a clean break from a world organized by the wealthy, for the wealthy.

As the radical ideas of thinkers such as Marx, Freud, and Einstein began to take hold, and the influence of religion weakened, people began to challenge orthodoxy and tradition, and agitate for fairer treatment of the poor and of women. It was in this spirit of modern rebellion that Virginia moved with her adult siblings out of the family home and into the (then rather seedy) London district of Bloomsbury to forge a new kind of living arrangement. Virginia and her sister Vanessa rejected the idea of a home presided over by a woman like their mother, the Victorian 'angel in the house,' and determined that instead of serving tea and looking decorative, they would take part in intellectual discussions with their brothers and friends. At the same time, however, Woolf and her friends and acquaintances in the free-thinking 'Bloomsbury Group' never questioned the necessity of employing servants to run even their most progressive of households.

To the Lighthouse in its time: - The First World War broke out suddenly in the summer of 1914 and dragged on far longer, and at vastly greater cost, than anyone had dared to predict. In Britain, thousands of young men responded to appeals to join up in defense of nation and 'civilization,' and found themselves stuck, in Ezra Pound's words, 'eye-deep in hell,' living in trenches alongside rats and corpses, and measuring their progress and victories in inches. The destruction of the landscape of battle, of human bodies, and of lives was unprecedented and indescribable, and for many writers and artists like Woolf, grouped under the loose term 'modernist,' it represented a decisive, irreparable break from the past and a need for new forms of representation in art and literature.

To The Lighthouse (1927), along with Woolf's two preceding novels Jacob's Room (1922) and Mrs. Dalloway (1925), emerges from the period of painful recovery from the war, and displays Woolf's innovations in prose fiction. Most strikingly, the major events of the novel -are contained in brief, condensed parentheses, while the day-to-day thoughts and memories of the characters expand to fill the surrounding pages. Although the novel is set on an island off the coast of Scotland, the house and surrounding landscape (including the lighthouse) are closely based on St. Ives, Cornwall, where the Stephen family spent their summers until Virginia's mother's death in 1895. It has therefore often been read as one of Woolf's most autobiographical novels. To the Lighthouse was first published by the Hogarth Press, established by Virginia and her husband Leonard in 1917 in the basement of their home, Hogarth House, in Richmond, west London. Woolf called it 'easily the best of my books,' and it sold so well that she and Leonard were able to buy their first car.

To the Lighthouse : Major Themes

Ephemerality: - Ephemeral means something which lasts for a short period of time. Few novels capture the ephemeral nature of life as poignantly as Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. Reality, when conceived of as a collection of fleeting moments, seems as chaotic and fluid as ocean waves. Each of the main characters struggles with this realization, and they all grasp for symbols of permanence and stability despite their understanding of the transience of experience. Mrs. Ramsay, consumed by a need to connect herself to lasting experiences, looks to the pulsating glow of the Lighthouse to unite her experience with a sense of endurance. For her, the steady stroke of the Lighthouse light represents stability and permanence. For this reason, she connects herself to it, unites herself with it, in the hope of gaining a similar sense of connection

both to her present and to eternity. In fact, she seeks not only to unite herself with the permanent objects in the physical world, but also to unite her friends, family, and guests in the creation of lasting beauty.

Whereas Mrs. Ramsay's search for permanence lies in the emotional realm of experience, her husband's is based entirely in the intellectual sphere. He longs to transcend his own lifetime with an important philosophical contribution, yet feels practically certain that this goal is unachievable. Lily Briscoe suffers from a similar fear that her paintings will be thrown into the attic, never to be fully appreciated and never to make a lasting impression.

By the culmination of the novel, however, Lily is able to surrender this need for permanence and meaning, and she is thus finally able to fulfil her artistic vision. This final scene suggests that Lily can only achieve a sense of fulfilment because she is able to relinquish her need for a permanently significant existence. She finally embraces the ephemeral nature of the countless experiences that constitute a lifetime.

Subjective Reality: - The omniscient narrator remained the standard explicative figure in fiction through the end of the nineteenth century, providing an informed and objective account of the characters and the plot. The turn of the 20th century, however, witnessed innovations in writing that aimed at reflecting a more truthful account of the subjective nature of experience. Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse is the triumphant product of this innovation, creating a reality that is completely constructed by the collection of the multiple subjective interiorities of its characters and presented in a stream-of-consciousness format. Woolf creates a fictional world in which no objective, omniscient narrator is present. There is a proliferation of accounts of the inner processes of the characters, while there is a scarcity of expositional information, expressing Woolf's perspective on the thoughts and reflections that comprise the world of the Ramsays.

Time is an essential component of experience and reality and, in many ways, the novel is about the passage of time. However, as for reality, Woolf does not represent time in a traditional way. Rather than a steady and unchanging rhythm, time here is a forward motion that both accelerates and collapses. In "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," time is conveyed only through the consciousness of the various characters, and moments last for pages as the reader is invited into the subjective experiences of many different realities. Indeed, "The Window" takes place over the course of a single afternoon that is expanded by Woolf's method, and "The Lighthouse" seems almost directly connected to the first section, despite the fact that ten years have actually elapsed. However, in "Time Passes," ten years are greatly compacted into a matter of pages, and the changes in the lives of the Ramsay's and their home seem to flash by like scenes viewed from the window of a moving train. This unsteady temporal rhythm brilliantly conveys the broader sense of instability and change that the characters strive to comprehend, and it captures the fleeting nature of a reality that exists only within and as a collection of the various subjective experiences of reality.

The Presence of the Lighthouse: - The Lighthouse is distant, old, and set against a landscape that fades to the farthest horizon, encompassing the length of visible space. This is a majestic image of a pillar of presiding stability and constant observation. It is a presence that extends beyond the physical and chronological boundaries of the Ramsay's

and their world, observing them and illuminating the rooms in which the contents of their minds are bared.

The Lighthouse offers a life force to Mrs. Ramsay and her family, propelling both the plot (the novel opens with the conflict surrounding James's desire to go to it) and the streams of consciousness that ensue. It has a clear and significant presence in this world, yet it is inanimate, not conscious, and it is a figure characterized by its distance from the immediate events of the novel. It seems somewhat elusive and intangible, having indistinct boundaries and features. The setting of the Lighthouse recedes into a realm "uninhabited by men" and therefore signifies a realm and life force that the characters cannot enter themselves. It is distant, intangible, and elusive.

Yet its qualities are permanent and ever-present. The Lighthouse is Mrs. Ramsay's source of stability and permanence, and it is the force that defines and joins the members of the Ramsay family. It is even present in their home during the ten years that the family is not there-presiding over the abandoned house.

Art as Unity and Permanence: - In the novel, art is defined by Lily (the novel's central artist) as something able to unify disparate elements into a cohesive whole. When she looks at her canvas, awaiting the fulfilment of her vision, she contemplates how she will incorporate several people and objects into the work in order to create a unified and singular product. This goal, she believes, is the responsibility of the artist, and her artistry represents her way of finding a sense of meaningful permanence in her existence.

Unity is also directly associated with permanence in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay's most active desire is to create moments of complete connection and unity between people. At her dinner party, she is disturbed by the lack of cohesion, and it is not until a fleeting moment when everyone seems to merge and assimilate into a single unit that she feels fulfilled. Such moments provide her with a sense of stability and endurance, for she knows that they will continue to exist in the memories of others even after she is dead.

In Mrs. Ramsay's preoccupation with cohesion, and in the connection between cohesion and art, Mrs. Ramsay herself comes to be a sort of artist. Lily acknowledges this figuration near the end of the novel, creating yet another connection with the deceased woman.

The Dichotomous Representation of Water: - Water has a great role throughout the novel, in particular as the characters spend a great deal of time looking at the sea that separates the Ramsay's summer home from the Lighthouse. The symbolism of the water is complex, however, for it seems to represent both permanence and ephemerality. Mrs. Ramsay enjoys listening to the waves beating against the shore. The rhythm is steady and constant, serving as a symbol of consistency and eternity. She learns to depend upon this sound, and it soothes her, providing a deep sense of stability.

Yet water also represents a destructive and erosive force. As Mr. Ramsay stands outside viewing the sea, he reflects that the piece of land beneath his feet will one day be completely worn away and consumed by the sea. In this sense, the sea is a constant and eternal force that magnifies its effects over time and ultimately proves the ephemerality of whatever it touches.

Time: - Time is one of the major themes of To the Lighthouse. Most of the adult characters fixate on the concept of time in one way or another. Mrs. Ramsay cannot help but notice that the present moment becomes the past, and she seeks objects in the external world to ground her in the moment. She also frets endlessly about how time will change her children's lives. She does not want James and Cam to grow up, for she knows that they will inevitably suffer. In essence, she wishes to stop time for her children, allowing them to be young and carefree forever.

Mr. Ramsay is obsessed with the future and, more specifically, the future of his career. He desperately longs to achieve greatness as a philosopher, but is almost certain that he will not, and he is preoccupied by envisioning the future and predicting whether or not he will be recognized and remembered. He is grief-stricken with the notion that no one will read his books after he has gone, and he laments the fact that young scholars are not interested in his work because they are, after all, the future leaders in the field.

Lily Briscoe is also preoccupied with time, but her fixation changes shape over the course of the novel. Originally, she shares similar concerns with Mr. Ramsay, wondering if her paintings will amount to anything and whether anyone will ever see them. By the final section of the novel, however, her thoughts are located more in the past and in her memories of Mrs. Ramsay. It is partially the effect of these memories that propels her forward and brings her vision into focus.

The Subversion of Female Gender Roles: - Many of the women in To the Lighthouse either overtly or silently subvert conventional female gender roles. Lily Briscoe, for example, has no desire to marry, but rather wants only to dedicate herself to her work (much like Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bankes). She is independent and self-sufficient, and she is able to disregard Mr. Tansley's chauvinistic comments about women being unable to paint. Despite Mrs. Ramsay's persuasion, she holds her ground throughout the novel, refusing to become any man's wife. These choices and ideas were very unconventional in the early 20th century.

Three of Mrs. Ramsay's daughters (Nancy, Rose, and Cam) also silently reject the life that their mother chose for herself, in all of its domesticity. They know that they want their lives to be different and more complex than what they perceive as the limited realm of wife-mother, and they are headstrong and adventurous.

Moreover, the novel promises only misfortune for the women who accept the roles carved out for them. Mrs. Ramsay dies unexpectedly at a relatively young age. Prue, shortly after getting married, dies as a result of childbirth. Even Minta, who had been a somewhat unconventional lady, suffers in her marriage, for Paul leaves her for another woman. The novel seems to punish the women who accept positions as wife and mother, while it abounds with young women who are sure that they want a different existence.

To The Lighthouse : Stream of Consciousness Novel

The phrase "Stream of Consciousness" was coined by William James to describe the flow of thoughts of the waking mind. It is a person's thoughts and conscious reactions to events, perceived as a continuous flow. In literature it is a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a conti

uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue. The related phrase "interior monologue" is used to describe the inner movement of consciousness in a character's mind. The use of devices of the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue marks a revolution in the form of the novel because through these devices the author can represent the flux of a character's thoughts, impressions, and emotions and reminiscences (recollections), often without any logical sequence.

According to Virginia Woolf, the conventional novel did not express life adequately. She was of the opinion that **life was a shower of ever-failing atoms of experience, and not a narrative line**. Life, she said, was a luminous halo (radiance), a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to end. She tried to experiment with the same technique in her novel, 'To the Lighthouse'. In which the characters reveal themselves very much in the same way. Although she depicts character through the inner consciousness of the person whom we meet in this novel but she herself remains the controlling intelligence, speaking in the third person. While she very seldom slips in comments of her own, she remains the narrator, telling us what is going on in the various minds.

Virginia Woolf shows us a particular person in this novel **not only through the consciousness of that person himself or herself**, **but also through the consciousness of the other persons.** We are given the interior monologues of the various characters in this novel, and it is largely through the twin devices of stream of consciousness and the interior monologue that we come to know the various characters. Thus we see Mrs. Ramsay not only through her own consciousness but through the consciousness of Mr. Ramsey, the child James, Lily Briscoe, Mr. Tansley and Mr. Bankes. Similarly we come to know Mr. Ramsay not only through his own consciousness but also through the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay, the young James, Lily Briscoe, and Mr. Bankes. In fact, every character in the novel is presented to us through his own consciousness and also through the consciousness of the other characters. At the same time, the characters are occasionally presented to us directly by the all-knowing author of the novel, and also sometimes bits of conversation or dialogue between the characters.

Mrs. Woolf's Concern in writing novels was not merely to narrate a story as the older novelists did, but to **discover and record life as the people feel who live it**. Hence it is **she rejected the conventional technique of narration and adopted a new technique more suited to her purposes**. It is for this reason that in 'To The Lighthouse' she did not tell a story, in the sense of a series of events, and has concentrated on a small number of characters, whose nature and feelings are represented to us largely through their interior monologues. In order to capture the inner reality, the truth about life, she has **tried to represent the moving current of life** and **the individual's consciousness of the fleeting movement**, and secondly, also to **select from this current and organize it** so that the novel may penetrate beneath the surface reality and may give to the reader a sense of understanding and completeness.

The readers are not placed directly within the minds of characters, as in the modern psychological novel, but the **central intelligence of the novelist** is constantly at work as the narrator, controlling and organizing the material, and illuminating it with its comments, and order emerges out of chaos. The interior mc

characters are, no doubt, given, but the novelist, **the central intelligence**, is also constantly busy, organizing the material and illuminating it by frequent comments. In this respect Mrs. Woolf's technique of narration is quite different from that of the "Stream of Consciousness" novelists. Far from being a stream of Consciousness novel, 'To the Lighthouse' is the objective account of a central intelligence that approaches and assumes the characters. Consciousness, but does not become completely identified with any one consciousness. This central intelligence is thus free to comment upon the whole in what seems a completely impersonal manner, as this short passage shows:

"It is a triumph' said Mr. Bankes, laying his knife down for a moment. He had eaten attentively. It was rich; it was tender. It was perfectly cooked. How did she manage these things in the depths of the country? He asked her. She was a wonderful woman. All his love, all his reverence, had returned; and she knew it."

"It is a French recipe of my grandmother's said Mrs. Ramsay, Speaking with a ring of great pleasure in her voice. Of course it was French. What passes for cookery in England is an abominations; it is pulling cabbages in water. It is roasting meat until it is like leather. It is cutting off the delicious skins of vegetables. 'In which', said Mr. Bankes,

"All the virtue of vegetables is contained" Here the central intelligence is reporting a part of the dinner Conversation.

Suspense and Curiosity are another aspect of Mrs. Woolf's technique of narration. She taking us into the middle of scene; Mrs. Ramsay's opening remark is the answer to unstated question, which we have to supply by picking up clues from what follows. The reader's natural curiosity thus becomes involved. We wonder who these people are, what they are talking about and so on. As we read on, prompted by this desire to know, we begin to recognize a pattern in the narrative at same time as we assimilate names, facts, ideas. Then, too, the pattern begins to establish itself; the **pattern** that is, of **Conversation** and **reaction**, of the actual words in the first person and the present tense, and the reflections of the characters in the third person and the past tense. This violence of feeling is seen first in the child, James and seems natural to the exaggeration of childhood; we are thus prepared in an acceptable way for the emotions of the adult character, Tempe real by age and experience, but made more complex too.

The **third person narration** is a very Common novel device used by Virginia Woolf. She is very careful to mock her direction of the narrative as little noticed as possible. Her use of direct speech for the interior monologues of her characters makes it easy for her to work into these mental soliloquies a number of statements and ideas which are outside the range of knowledge of character she is dealing with.

When, for example, at the beginning, she describes the feelings of James about his father, she moves from what the child is thinking to what Mrs. Ramsay habitually did and said, through impersonal sentences:

"Had there been an ate handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's bre

mere presence : Standing: disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment. What he said was true. It was always true. He Was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children, who sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult……."

We can see the two currents of thoughts flowing together. Just as this third person narration makes it possible for Virginia Woolf to move smoothly from one character to another, so in the novel as a whole it is a unifying Principle.

The **completion of the circle** is another quality of Virginia Woolf. If the arrival at the lighthouse and the completion of Lily Briscoe's picture complete the circle of the book, and if Time Passes forms a sort of landing between the upward movements of The Window and the downward, resolving movements of The Lighthouse, we find here the same structural design. The Part I conforms to this design. Section II, when the fairy tale is finished and James has gone, a perfect moment, rich with solitude and revelation, certainly forms a peak that communicates its exaltation to the second half of the chapter, which however, never reaches the same intensity at this may moment.

To sum up, Virginia Woolf has employed the lighthouse as a symbol and it has a number of undertones of meaning, and serves the purpose of a unifying factor in the novel. The **action moves on normal constructional lines from scene to scene** and **from the mind of one person to that of another**. These shifts from one consciousness to another and these movements are made further easy by allowing every incident to take place in a close knit homogenous world. 'To The Lighthouse' is a masterpiece of Construction. It is an organic whole. It is a great work of art which fully deserves the praises that have been lavished on it.

"To The Lighthouse" : Symbolism

Written from multiple perspectives and shifting between times and characters with poetic grace, "To the Lighthouse" is not concerned with ordinary story telling. Rather through integrate symbolic web it reads the mind and recounts the passage of multiple experiences of different characters in the novel. The **key symbols** in "To the Lighthouse" are – **the sea, the lighthouse, Lily's painting, the window, and the personalities of Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay**. They are all woven together, along with many other less important ones, into a central meaning, which suggests Mrs. Woolf's conception of life and reality. Let them study closely under the following heads.

The **sea** as the **eternal flux of time and life** The Sea with its waves is to be heard throughout the novel. It symbolizes the eternal flux of time and life, in the midst of which we all exist; it constantly changes its character. To Mrs. Ramsay at one moment it sounds soothing and consoling like a cradle song, at others, "like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beating a warning of death it brings terror. Sometimes its power "sweeping savagely in, "seems to reduce the individual to nothingness, at others it sends up 'a fountain of bright water" – which seems to match the sudden springs of vitality in the human spirit.

The Lighthouse holds a whole **cluster of suggestion.** It is a mystery, yet a concern for day-to-day living. It is at once distant and close at the mercy of its destructive forces. The **lighthouse surrounded by sea** always **illumines and clarifies the human condition** in some way. Farther, it is the quest for the values the lighthouse suggests. The tower is frequently shadowed in mist, its beams are intermittent in the darkness, the moments of assurance they bring the momentary, but upon these assurances reality rests, by landing on the general doubts, something which seems to triumph over the eternal cycle of change. To **reach the lighthouse is to establish a creative relationship.**

Indeed, the lighthouse is the most important symbol and different critics have explained it in different ways. For example Russell declares that the lighthouse is the feminine creative principle. Jon Bennett calls the alternate light and shadows of the lighthouse the rhythm of joy and sorrow, understanding and misunderstanding. F.L. Overcarsh finds the novel as a whole an allegory of the old and New Testaments: Mrs. Ramsay is Eve, the Blessed virgin and Christ; Mr. Ramsay is among other things God the Father; the lighthouse is Eden and Heaven. The strokes of the lighthouse are the persons of the Trinity, the third of them, long and steady representing the Holy Ghost. The lighthouse as symbol has not one meaning, that it is a vital synthesis of time and eternity: an objective correlative for Mrs. Ramsay's vision, after whose death it is her meaning.

The Window is a symbol of a **view to oneself.** It is from the window that we have the little of the part-I of "To the Lighthouse". It is not a transparent but a separating sheet of glass between reality and Mrs. Ramsay's mind. Mrs. Ramsay experiences such moments of revelation and integration at watching the window. It is the very symbol of the imperfection of our knowledge and riddle of human mind. It is debates about philosophy, particularly theories about visual reality on the three main philosophers of British empiricism, John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. The basic argument of empiricism is whether or not a person can be empirically certain that objects have a distinct and continued existence apart from our perceptions of them.

The **characters** are carefully arranged in the novel in their relation to each other, so that a **definite symbolic pattern emerges**. Mrs. Ramsay pervades the whole book. Mrs. Ramsay is the mother of the Ramsay family who dies during the middle section of the novel. A beautiful, caring woman, she means all things to all people, and each character of "To the Lighthouse" has a different perception of her personality. Lily sees her as a mother, and doesn't think she has ever inspired romantic passion. William Bankes and Charles Tansley adore her, and think she doesn't realize how beautiful she is. The children see her as the "Lighthouse" of their lives—the stable, warm force that protects and guides them. She is above all the creator of fertile human relationships symbolized by her love of match making and her knitting; and of warm comfort symbolized by her green shawl. Just as Mrs. Ramsay stands for creative vitality, so Mr. Ramsay stands as the symbol of the sterile, destructive barriers to relationship. Just as Mrs. Ramsay is described in images of fertility and the warmth and comfort of love and harmony with others, Mr. Ramsay is evoked in images of sterility, hardness and cruelty and of deliberate isolation. It is to be noted that Mr. Ramsay is the father of the family is the most misunderstood character in the book, a man whose children hate him because they think he is viciously unemotional and cold.

Lily's Picture has also got symbolic importance. Lily sees that Mrs. Ramsay's gift of harmonizing human relationship into memorable moments is "almost like a work of art" and in the book art is the ultimate symbol for the enduring 'reality'. In life, as Mrs. Ramsay herself well knows relationships are doomed to imperfection, and are the spot of time and change; but in art the temporal and the eternal unity in an unchanging form-through, as in Lily's picture, the form may be very inadequate. We cannot doubt that Lily's struggles with the composition and texture of her painting are a counter part of Virginia Woolf's tussles and triumphs in her own medium, but she chooses poetry as the image that reminds mankind that the ever changing can yet become immortal. Lily is a Postimpressionist painter, descendant of a poor family, and has spent most of her life taking care of her father. In many ways, Lily is the chorus figure of the book—providing the histories of the characters and commenting on their actions. The beginning and completion of her painting form the frame of To the Lighthouse, and her final line, "**I have had my vision,"** is the final line of the novel, acting as Woolf's own comment on her book.

To sum up, the use of symbols serve the purpose of introspection, self-awareness, and openness to the unconscious in the novel. Composed on the flow of sensations, thoughts, memories, associations, and reflections in the ambit of symbol the action moves on normal constructional lines from scene to scene and from the mind to mind. There is less complication. These shifts from one consciousness to another and these movements are made further easy by allowing every incident to take place in close-knit homogeneous world. To The Lighthouse is a masterpiece of construction through symbolism. It is an organic whole.

"To the Lighthouse" : Study of Human Relations

"To The Lighthouse" has a galaxy of fictional characters whose earnest endeavour is to establish, with varying degrees of success, happy and healthy relationship with the people around them. Accepting this as its main theme, the novel may justly be called a study of the ways and means by which satisfactory human relationship might be established with the people around them. This is because human beings seemed to Mrs. Woolf isolated and communication between them partial and often far from satisfactory.

In human society **words** are the main sources of communication between one person and another. Unfortunately words are very often **inadequate** for the purpose. This is one of the main reasons for the **failure to establish healthy and satisfactory human relationships**. The difficulty is that very often **words cannot express the full complexity of a character's thoughts and feelings**. Then again what the words express is only a fraction of what a character thinks and feels, and as a result they become **misleading**. These aspects of **verbal inadequacy** were quite evident to Mrs. Woolf. And many of her characters reveal this inadequacy in a distinct manner. Lily feels this strongly as in the third part of the novel when she is seen standing near to Carmichael on the lawn and trying to explain Mrs. Ramsay:

"And she wanted to say not one thing, but everything. Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it, said nothing. 'About life, about death; about Mrs. Ramsay'—no she thought one could say nothing to nobody. The urgency of the moment

always missed the mark. Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches to low. Then one gave it up; For how could one express in words these emotions of the body?"

Very often it is found that **silence is more expressive and eloquent than words**. And Lily realises it fully. She feels in greater communication with Carmichael than if they had spoken. There sitting on the lawn in perfect silence they seem to understand each other perfectly well without exchanging even a single word. And in the final chapter of the novel Lily justly feels: **'They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same thing and he had answered her without, her asking him anything'.** Thus it is revealed to us that silence is often more expressive and more eloquent than words —words that fail to express 'these emotions of the body', and lead to the establishment of happy human relationships.

In the novel we also find that how **trivial things** of very little importance are **greatly helpful** in es**tablishing congenial human relationships**. In the beginning of the third or final movement of the book we find Mr. Ramsay the widower coming to Lily demanding sympathy. She really feels very helpless and words fail her in the beginning. Suddenly his boots catch her eyes and she praises his boots. This brings great relief and Mr. Ramsay feels satisfied. Apparently Lily's remarks may seem silly or comic. But 'Mr. Ramsay smiled. His pall, his draperies, his infirmities fell from him'. Thus it helped to establish perfect sympathy and understanding between Lily and Mr. Ramsay and Lily 'felt her eyes swell and tingle with tears'.

Congenial and satisfactory human relationships are essential for happiness in our life. Logic, reason and intellect are of very little help to us for this purpose. It is through emotions that we can establish such relationships. **Emotional understanding and a genuine sympathetic attitude are greatly needed for satisfactory relationships** even between parents and children, and husband and wife. In the very first scene of the novel we find how far the lack of these mental aspects Mr. Ramsay becomes an intolerable tyrant or a 'sarcastic brute' in the eyes of his children. He tells James the dire truth 'it won't be fine'—without caring a bit for a young child's dreams and desires. James feels like gashing a hole in his father's breast to kill him there and then. But Mrs. Ramsay with her loving soul and sympathetic understanding wins the heart of the children and is tremendously loved and admired by her children. She undoubtedly soothes them by telling them that the weather might change for the better. But it is only to make the world a better and happier place.

Virginia Woolf shows us in many ways that **Mrs. Ramsay plays a very significant part** in To the Lighthouse to **establish communication between people**. This is first revealed in her genuine attempts to get Paul and Minta as well as Lily and Mr. Bankes married. And it is shown very nicely and convincingly at the dinner party where she makes the most sincere effort to get people talking, to involve them and so to create something of the time they are together.

There is a note of pretence and falsehood even in the **husband-wife relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay**. Mrs. Ramsay cannot but praise Mr. Ramsay to his face just to booster up his confidence in a way she feels should not be necessary. He is in constant need of being reassured. His fear of failure, his resentment that he has achieved less than he should have and that his books will not last, pervert his judgement, leading him to see in praise of other men's works disparagemen

of himself. This undoubtedly puts a strain on his wife and she has to conceal things for him. Again on Mr. Ramsay's, side too there is some sort of reserve. Mrs. Ramsay's pessimistic conviction of the misery of life distresses him, and then he is unable to communicate with her in her moods of sadness.

The first movement of the novel The Window, traces the pattern of their relationship very skilfully from one extreme to another. In the very first scene we find them at their farthest apart when their disagreement about going to the Lighthouse brings out their difference quite sharply in their attitudes to life. Mr. Ramsay is upset, is rather infuriated. **"The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him.....and now she flew in the face of facts, made her children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies."**

Mrs. Ramsay's Attitude brings **final reconciliation**. Mrs. Ramsay is also upset in her own way. With her loving heart and sympathetic bent of mind she wants to make people happy in this world and longs for protecting her children from losing the contented innocence of childhood. Hence her husband's irrational and stern attitude seems to her equally repugnant, **"to pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency".** But very soon after this incident they begin to come together again. It starts with Mrs. Ramsay's apology. And after this we find that the remaining sections of 'The Window' move towards the moment at the end, when the firm severity of the masculine mind, which she admires in him, curbs her gloomy thoughts and she is able, though indirectly, to assure him of her love.

"And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she has not said a word, he knew, of course that she loved him".

To sum up, We may now rightly assert that "To the Lighthouse" reveals a very close study of the ways and means by which satisfactory and congenial human relationships might be established. Mrs. Ramsay is the centre around which action and movement are built. She plays the most significant role as a force by holding together almost all the characters and incidents of this great novel.

Constrictions of family life & concept of god

In "To the Lighthouse" Woolf tried not only to recover the memories of her childhood but also to record her tangled feelings about Victorian marriage and family life as well as about the substitutes for them that some rebellious modern spirits had proposed. Well she says in the following lines:

"… so that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball…And suddenly the meaning which for no reason at all as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or ringing a doorbell, descends on people, making them symbolical, making them representative, came upon them and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife."

Throughout her novel, she stresses the fact that **each one of us is alone** in a world where family bonds are nothing but manacles to personal freedom and that we live in a universe ungoverned by an All-mighty God. Her view of the world, though, is by no means a bleak one as there is the light and warmth of Art to surround us and unify us. Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen describes the family as a sort of First Cause. Virginia Woolf, though, born in 1882 was destined to witness and be a part of a remarkable change as far as family and marriage were concerned. Consequently, the way she depicts Mr. Ramsay in "To the Lighthouse" is her way of showing the insecurity, confusion and even the desperation hiding behind the Iron-mask of the Powerful Patriarch.

She **stripes the King of the House** off his psychological defences and leaves him naked before us. She wants us to see the Victorian Myth of domestic relationships collapse. Her psychological stripping of her major characters- like Strachey's in Eminent Victorians- is a version of The Emperor's New Clothes. This "emperor" here, Mr. Ramsay cannot communicate with his children, he is impatient, demanding, short-tempered and so self-absorbed that he is always preoccupied with his professional success seeking confirmation from his wife. He has, also, idolized Mrs. Ramsay as a perfect representative of the Victorian Patriarch Moreland he strongly holds that each sex is destined to live and act in its own private sphere with no interferences of any kind. Tansley's remark **"women can't write, women can't paint"** is nothing but a more crude articulation of Mr. Ramsay's attitude.

Virginia Woolf wants to emphasize the "**sexual polarization of Victorian** family life" and the effect it had on the women and offspring of a typical Victorian family. Mrs. Ramsay, who "often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions "reads her son the Grimm's tale "The Fisherman and His Wife'. Woolf's choice of this story is by no means a random one; it voices Mr. Ramsay's belief that women are inferior to men and should conform to their wishes. Mrs. Ramsay is, nevertheless, the only one who believes in family and in fact uses all her charm to bring people together. She is the luminous Angel of the House and an ardent matchmaker. Apart from her, no one else is happy with marriage or family life.

Every single character in "To the Lighthouse" stresses the right to choose. Mr. Ramsay regards his wife and family as impediments to his nobler aim to reach letter "R" intellectually. **"He would have written better books if he had not married**". Mr. Bankes justifies the fact that Mr. Ramsay broke his promise assuming that married life must be a burden: **"He had seen him divest himself of all those glories of isolation and austerity which crowned him in youth to cumber himself definitely with fluttering wings and clucking domesticities**".

Charles Tansley disapproves of Mr. Ramsay's career after his marriage by saying: **"Of course Ramsay had dished himself by marrying a beautiful woman and having eight children."** Lily Briscoe, too, chooses work and Art over getting married as she thought she, "need never marry anybody and she felt an enormous exultation". Woolf, though, does not blame any of her characters for their belief that vocation; work and family life cannot be integrated. She blames the Victorian World, which groomed and nurtured her characters. Woolf wants to stress that ossified sexist beliefs, as well, as the idolization of Women as Angels of the Hearth and of men as devoted people of career, have isolated people from each other. In this sense the self-pitying utter

Ramsay **"we perished, each alone"** is a realistic cry: a morn depicting the core of human relationships in his times. Mrs. Ramsay is obsessed with trying to push people towards the altar of marriage. She wants Mr. Bankes and Lily to get married. Lily, though, prefers her Art, while Mr. Bankes, at the dinner table, thinks to himself: **"How trifling it all is, how boring it all is, compared to the other thing-work."**

One of Mrs. Ramsay's children rushes off to the attic **"to escape the horror of family life".** She knows that her daughters, Cam and Prue, already have dreams different from hers: **"infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other."** After Mrs. Ramsay's death, in Part III, the traditional Victorian family is turned upside down. We see a change in everything. Women can be devoted careerists and artists too, unmarried people can feel happy and fulfilled with themselves, unlike Lily's past declaration that she felt **"a skimpy old maid, holding a paint brush in the lawn"** and of course, love is not always the basis of a marriage. Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, the couple brought together by Mrs. Ramsay's hard efforts is not happily married. Lily remains a "spinster"; Mr. Bankes remains a "bachelor" and as Lily says to the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay: **"It has all gone against your wishes… Life has changed completely".** Minta's frequent infidelities and Paul's taking up a mistress haven't broken up their marriage, though**: "far from breaking up their marriage, that alliance had righted it. They were excellent friends".** Life changes and what is moral or immoral changes as well.

The whole book is about change that is why it characterized as an inclusive Fiction. It allows divergences to coexist in order to bring about harmony. Her characters move towards the same goal through different paths. Mr. Ramsay and his son are brought together when the former praises the boy. While at the same time, Lily Briscoe finishes her painting and concludes her "vision". Symbolically, the past returns and shapes the present. Mrs. Ramsay comes back in Lily's picture and the murderous instinct towards his father is wiped out from James' heart. All the tiny threads of the story come together, forming a harmony and a delight that owes nothing either to a God or to an ossified Victorian Institution but to life, love and the power of people to change things and transform them.

To the Lighthouse" : A Portrait of a Real Woman

Virginia Woolf was an important precursor in Feminism. She comes after a long line of eminent Victorians of her own sex, who have joined the immortals of English literature-George Eliot, Jane Austen and the two Bronte's. She was not of their stature but only against their background can her peculiar feminine contribution to English novel be fully assessed or appreciated.

'To the Lighthouse' **projects challenges** or **realization of productive and creative possibilities of female characters** like **Mrs**. **Ramsay**, **Lily Briscoe**, **Nancy Ramsay**, and other characters who move around these central characters. These characters are to be studied with the feministic point of view and built as a portrait of real woman in the Victorian England as well as its relevance in the present scenario.

Generally speaking, the word 'sex' plays an essential role in defining the gender of a woman when she is put in the flow of Society's stream of socialization. The existence of a woman is not supposed to identify by the physical appearance, but by the actions and thoughts also. There is no any suspicion in telling truth that 'Sex' is born identity whereas 'Gender' is coined identity by society in which a woman lives. It is imposed upon her to behave, to think and to play a female role in specific way.

To commence with the idea of writing a novel by lady novelist (not female novelist) itself is a strong element in discussing these female characters. Virginia portraits female characters as a **typical female**, doing her household work, beguiling other family members what they would prefer to have and docile as a passive character, actively participating in what she is supposed to do. Character like Mrs. Ramsay is depicted as a working woman in the house, as **not responsibility but as a duty**. Because the atmosphere is created in such a way that they should not create any problem or complain, found by the boss (husband) Mr. Ramsay.

From start of the novel to its end, it names her as Mrs. Ramsay, not her actual name. She directly seems to be a subjugated woman with the name of **superiority's surname**. The very logic lies in this context is that Mrs. Ramsay plays her duty what her imposed name will urge her to do.

Apart from naming the characters, female character **Mrs. Ramsay plays plenty of roles** like a **wife, a mother, a care-taker, organizer of the household work, protector of her family's reputation and social credit, friend, as a relative matchmaker** for Lily and Tansley and so on and so forth. It is incredible to assume that such a **multi-dimensional responsibility** performing her duties simultaneously, defines the role of woman in the society. Such a female character, having eight children to bring up, taking much care of them not being distracted toward evil path and being practical in the flow of the time, seems impossible for a moment but Woolf has portrayed such motherly figure in her novel. But the sudden sharp turn in the novel, revealing Mrs. Ramsay's unexpected death. It challenges the modern codes and conducts of Post-Modern time in which the people fail to recognize the need and necessity of the women.

People do not value of what they keep or what they have. Mrs. Ramsay might have been respected by family members and guests but being not there, may not make Mr. Ramsay need of her but changing time changes the minds of the people, too. Death of Mrs. Ramsay does matter, because there is a crucial association between her and the lighthouse. To adjust people and other things and to reach people to the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay seemed **much active** as far as male's contribution to organize life and sustenance is concerned.

The novelist **selects the female characters to arrange a day for the lighthouse**, to **keep balance in social relationships**, and what is more important is to satisfy male-ego. She makes her husband uncomfortable because of her being died. She makes other characters to talk about the person who is died now. Why the novelist plays with the female characters is still in vagueness. Life before her death was like; she was lonely but never alone. It means, albeit, she was never surrounded by the people, felt lonely and never satisfied by the intimate relatives being with her.

Mrs. Ramsay thinks that with whom she was living, are 'sterile' and incapable, and that **"if she did not do it, nobody would do it."** So taking care of children and guests, Mrs. Ramsay ponders that the way she was playing a role of giver and arranger, will not be maintained by others. She sees life not as it should be but as it may be. Deferring from her husband, she finds her children's happiness in telling what they want to deserve. The happiness of the children like James and others, is not supposed to mar, rather it is to be maintained, and increased.

Mrs. Ramsay's attitude toward children and relatives, somehow, keeps Mr. Ramsay separated, because what is real and the fact is to be taught to the children. But somewhere, Ramsay fails to realize that such a delicate and fragile period of kids should be kept joyful and society known enough. To help children to see world beautifully, goes to the side of Mrs. Ramsay and it is followed. But ramset interrupts this cycle of learning. James asks for visiting the lighthouse and his urge causes invisible controversies among the husband and wife.

Woolf **challenges the wrong perception about the male's mind-set**. The children become happier when a mother interacts with them yet she speaks a lie but it is a white lie that makes children very happy. Generally, progenies are more inclined to mother's way of nurturing. So Mr. Ramsay feels jealousy and tells that that day's weather would be drowsier and cloudy, not good for him. This can be called a creative faculty of female to bring up offspring. She is an artist, the house, husband, children and relatives are her medium; if indeed if the purpose of the art for her, as it is for Lily, is to unite and allow them to experience the life together in brief, prefect understanding, then the party is nothing less than her masterpiece, impeccably perfect one.

When the matter of creation comes forward, Lily Briscoe's interest in painting comes as a part of studding her role in the society and place of creative and flowered faculty of mind. Tansley always debases her paintings and gives several examples of famous paintings of the other countries. Hence creative ability of the women is suppressed in terms of demotivating them. Just the critical words of the male characters make whole novel as a feministic text taking Post-Modern generation into consideration. Lily is an independent, educated little creature, not confined to the home domestically. Women want to be free in their thinking. Their thoughts are bound by the invisible shackles of male's criticism.

Even **other female characters**, moving around these two, **play a vital role** that is mentioned in the starting of the essay. They are not much mentioned itself suggests that existence of women in the society is mandatory but if the crisis occurs becomes **compulsory**. The concept of morality in depicting Mrs. Ramsay defers from page to page of the novel and incidents to incidents. To endure, to suffer, to be subdued and docile, and not to remain talkative but it engenders the readers to think that male-dominated society should claim women's place in it.

In a nutshell, the depiction of a woman in the novel is subjugated by the educated husband who is a philosopher and intellectual. Various readings of the novel bring the point of stream of consciousness that it also affected by feministic reading. One character thinking about what he [or she] thinks about what,

in the novel. Thinking process is lacking the need of Mrs. Ramsay who is not supposed to die but to remain alive until the last page of the novel to come.

"To the Lighthouse" : The relation of art and life

In "To the Lighthouse" we find that Mrs. Ramsay opens the novel and Lily Briscoe closes it, as the stuff of life may be converted, through a particular medium, to a work of art. So, if life and art are viewed as polar opposites in "To the Lighthouse", Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe may be regarded as their respective exponents. And in our first view of Mrs. Ramsay she is already the subject of Lily's painting. The main reason for Mrs. Ramsay becoming the chief character of the novel is that as personification or as abstraction, life is longer than art. Probably, that is why Part I, in which life dominates, is almost twice the length of Part III, in which art is the focal centre.

Art Needs Life to Nourish It: - It cannot be disputed that art can be nourished only in life. But whereas art needs life to nourish it, life is often unaware of the power of art to give it permanence. Thus, although Lily the painter is in love with Mrs. Ramsay and, we may add, with all her family and their diverse doings, she cannot take Lily's painting seriously. Thus, too, Mrs. Ramsay's quite literal short-sightedness is played against Lily's 'vision'. To Lily it seems ironic that Mrs. Ramsay presided with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand; Mrs. Woolf wants to suggest that life may be its own worst enemy, even as the artist may rebel against art's strict exigencies. Although it is only momentary, Mrs. Ramsay 'felt alone in the presence of her old antagonist, life'. And Lily is 'drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of the formidable ancient enemy of her....this form....roused one to perpetual combat.'

Mrs. Ramsay and Lily: - It may be noted that the two women are not monolythic symbols, but reveal vivid personalities behind their major meaning. Hence it is not 'artistic' Lily but 'living' Mrs. Ramsay, who is endowed with rare beauty. But both women have a slightly exotic quality—Lily her Chinese eyes, and Mrs. Ramsay, a Hellenic face. And both women dress soberly in grey. Inspite of her easy, direct spontaneity, we never become familiar enough with Mrs. Ramsay to learn her first name. On the other hand, Mrs. Ramsay calls Lily by her Christian name, suggesting the pure virgin which by Part III, when she is forty four becomes a skimpy old maid holding a paintbrush'. These humanizing details root the character to a literal ground, so that they never become figures of allegory, but rather magnetic poles for particular lines of force.

Mrs. Ramsay Dominates Part I Completely: - In Part I we find that Mrs. Ramsay who is at the heart of all the busy, indiscriminate activities of her large family and her too numerous summer guests. With her masterfulness, her positiveness, something matter-of-fact in her enables her to manage superbly other people's lives, from trivial to important aspect. On the other hand, Lily can barely manage to manipulate her paint brushes, and shrinks from anything strange on her canvas. And then by Part III Lily has become aware of a fundamental difference between herself and Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay might fall occasionally into meditation but she 'disliked anything that reminded her that she had been seen sitting thinking.' But both in Lily the painter and Mr.

Carmichael the poet there was some notion about the ineffectiveness of action, the supremacy of thought.

Efforts to Render Her Actions Effective: - We find Mrs. Ramsay bending all efforts to render her actions effective. The most important of them is her endeavour to supply emotional sustenance for her husband and children and it is found that when she dies they are left in a chaotic confusion. This is clearly revealed in the opening of Part III. This is how Lily felt after coming back to that old summer-house after so many years:

"She had come last night when it was all mysterious, dark. Now she was awake…..There was this expedition—they were going to the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James. They should have gone already-they had to catch the tide or something. And Cam was not ready and, James was not ready and Nancy had forgotten to order the sandwiches and Mr. Ramsay had lost his temper and banged out of the room". Mrs. Ramsay is a very ardent match-maker and she also feel protective towards the whole male sex. She is also eager to help the poor and the sick. And then she is found striving earnestly for the unity and integrity of social scenes such as her dinner party. Lily Briscoe also acknowledges Mrs. Ramsay's manipulation of life. But, ironically, Mrs. Ramsay is seen 'making' while Lily merely 'tried'. But unfortunately Mrs. Ramsay's efforts are doomed from the start; life cannot stand still; time must pass. It is only in another sphere can moments be given permanence. And the notable difference between the two is that Mrs. Ramsay has the rare beauty of ordering a scene so that it is, 'like a work of art', but it is Lily who creates a concrete work of art.

Lily and Her Art: - From our first view of Lily in the first part of the novel, 'standing on the edge of the lawn painting' to the significant final view, 'Yes, she thought laying down, her brush in extreme fatigue. I have had my vision'-the insistence is upon her art. From the very beginning, inspite of all her doubts and diffidence, she is found painting with stubborn integrity to her vision, in the bright colours which Mr. Paunceforte's pastels have rendered unfashionable. It is the resolution to move her tree to the centre of the canvas that sustains her through the dinner party, protects her against Charles Tansley's pronouncement that women cannot paint or write. And by Part III we find that Lily's paint brush has become for her 'the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos' and she seems more sure of her technique: the lines are nervous, but her brush-strokes are decisive. It is she who imagines the artistic creeds of Carmichael "how 'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass, and vanish; nothing stays all changes; but not words not paint". Yet even then, even to the final brush-stroke that brings the novel to a close, she continues to be haunted by the problematical and shifting relationship of art and life.

Part III: Art and Life: - This relation of art to life has been most beautifully treated in Part III of the novel. The structure of this section is based upon the shuttling back and forth between Lily on the island and those in the boat watching the island, who in turn get further away. This is accompanied by the corresponding movement of those in the boat getting closer to the Lighthouse and Lily, getting closer to the solution of her aesthetic problem. And the determining factor of each is love (the art of life), which might perhaps be defined as order or the achievement of form in human relations through the surrender of personality. Lily finishes her pa

sympathy for Mr. Ramsay which she had previously refused to give. James and Cam give up their long-standing antagonism towards their father. Mr. Ramsay himself, at the same time, attains a resolution of his own tensions and worries. Hence 'the two actions, the arrival at the lighthouse and the last stroke of the push are also united; both are acts of completion and it is obvious that they are meant to happen together.'

In "To the Lighthouse", Mrs. Virginia Woolf Stood Apart from her Age

Virginia Woolf turned over in our minds to be "stood apart from her age", for she had no part and parcel with the noisy trafficking of the years between the wars. Virginia Woolf is more in the mood of investigating and portraying the inner realities of human mind than the husk of life or external world. In a word, this would be appropriate to say that Virginia Woolf's novels do not mirror her age. Now we would discuss how far this remark is in the vicinity of verisimilitude. A momentous work of art may or may not be triumphant in having immediate approbation but to be significant at all, it may, in some direct or indirect, have contemporary significance.

Even a work of universal importance is willy-nilly a work of contemporary judiciousness. The plays of Shakespeare are the case in point. Of course, this does not mean that an exceptional writer always keeps him busy in social nit-picking. It interprets and expresses the contemporary truth which is more than mere social criticism. The statement that Virginia Woolf stood apart from her age is not entirely accurate; Virginia Woolf's opus is an oeuvre of considerable contemporary momentousness. The period between two great wars was a period of transition, a period of breaking up and settling down, a sort of cultural weekend between two full weeks of full time cultural activity. The two days of the weekend reflect the twenties and thirties respectively of this century. There is a considerable difference between these two decades. The imaginative and romantic literature of the twenties is not so much of sociological importance. It does not concern itself with the study of man as a member of a community. It falls in twenties that Virginia Woolf bore the best of her talented part of work.

To be truly a representative of this age, this oeuvre could only communicate the "Orts, scraps and fragments" of a distinguished and disintegrated society. If by standing apart from her age, we mean that in her composition, she is aloof from the contemporary scene in its material manifestations, the predicaments of business, industry and politics, the charge is veracious. Virginia Woolf did not stand apart from her times in the sense that she did not leave alone the fundamental law of literature that is of spiritual significance to the age and the people for which it is jotted down. Most of her novels are related to stream of consciousness movement. Mrs. Ramsay is the protagonist of the novel "To the Lighthouse". Her stream of outlook has divergent traits. Like all other women, her children, her shabbiness, gossip and rumours of surroundings are her concern. Only at times, the problem of suffering death and penury captivate her imagination. Her stream of thought bears the fillip of her personality.

Another universal phenomenon, the novelist presents and exhibits in her work of fiction through Lily Briscoe. She shows us that from what sort of circumstances, an artist undergoes in the process of creation. Lily like Mrs. Ramsay puts her endeavours to denude reality. She paints her picture, which is accomplished with flying cc

the journey "To the Lighthouse" comes off. Unlike James Joyce, Mrs. Virginia Woolf unveils the contemporary colour of stream of awareness through a number of characters. Many of her novels as Mrs. Dalloway, The Waves, Between the Acts, The years and To the Lighthouse are the evidence of the reality that Mrs. Virginia Woolf has not stood apart from her age.

Moreover, Virginia's staging of her age is according to the grapevine hidden but through the characters that she has dilated, it turns out to be lucid like daylight that she is not in some dingy, shabby, in-house world where the outer circumstances cannot enter. She exudes the breath and odour of realistic human behaviours in her works. So by all means we can opine that Virginia is a writer of extreme understanding of human behaviours and psychology, she lives in a time specific but thinks and visualises it in universal backdrop. That is why, sometime critics feel that she stood apart from her age, but it is not possible for a realistic writer like Virginia to turn a deaf ear to the cries of her age.

"To The Lighthouse" as a novel of manners presenting a picture of the middle class academic society

Introductory Remarks: - In her one of the most well-known essays included in The Common Reader: First Series, while expressing her views about the early work of James Joyce Virginia Woolf has given us her ideas about the significance of small events which are worth noting. This is what she says about it.

"Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. Anyone who has read The Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man or what promises to be a far more interesting work, Ulysses now appearing in The Little Review will have hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr. Joyce's intention. Mr. Joyce is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of those signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see.... If we want life itself, here surely we have it."

Treatment of Minor Events: - A careful study of Virginia Woolf's novel clearly reveals that there is a tendency to give importance to minor and random events such as measuring the stocking, a fragment of a conversation with the maid, a telephone call, or throwing of the mutilated fish into the sea in To The Lighthouse. According to an eminent critic—great changes, exterior turning points, let alone catastrophes, do not occur and though elsewhere in To The Lighthouse such things are mentioned, it is hastily, without preparation or context incidentally, and as it were only for the sake of information." This is how Time Passes, the second part of To The Lighthouse tragic deaths of Prue Ramsay and Andrew Ramsay are announced and that also in brackets:

"[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with child-birth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more.]"

And this about Andrew:

"[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous]". The same tendency is revealed in works of some very different writers, such as Proust of France or Hamsun of Norway. But we now find writers presenting minor happenings, which are insignificant as exterior factors in a person's destiny, for their own sake or rather as points of departure for the development of motives, for a penetration which opens up new prospective into a milieu or a consciousness or the given historical setting. "They have discarded presenting the story of their characters with any claim to exterior completeness in chronological order, and with the emphasis on exterior turning points of destiny. James Joyce's tremendous novel—an encyclopaedic work, a mirror of Dublin, of Ireland, a mirror too of Europe and its millennia—has for its frame the externally insignificant course of a day in the lives of a school teacher and an advertising broker. It takes less than twenty-four hours in their lives—just as To The Lighthouse describes portions of two days widely separated in time.',

Importance of Apparently Small Affairs: - Very often Virginia Woolf has tried to reveal the importance of small and trivial affairs just to suggest the deal of inadequacy of human relationship. In the first part of To The Lighthouse we find Mrs. Ramsay having a feeling of a very disagreeable sensation when she becomes conscious of the fact that she had to hide many small things from her husband—that the mending of the greenhouse roof would cost fifty pounds, 'that his last book was not quite his best book.' She sadly felt that all this diminished the entire joy, the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together'. Then the sight of Augustus Carmichael shuffling past strongly reminded her the inadequacy of human relationships. She remembered how odious it was on the part of Mrs. Carmichael to turn her husband out of their house. She could never understand Mr. Carmichael, the poet, whom Lily Briscoe understood and appreciated so much and who seemed to her 'like on old pagan god, shaggy with weeds in his hair and the trident…..in his hand'. So the Carmichael and the fairy story of the fisherman and his wife, which Mrs. Ramsay was reading to James, her youngest son, become the symbol of the inadequacy of human relationships to her.

A Picture of Middle Class Society: - Virginia Woolf's special linking for this apparently small and trivial affairs is mainly responsible for making To The Lighthouse a picture of the middle class society. Ralph Freedman has elaborately discussed this point in his book. According to him:"To The Lighthouse-like most novels by Virginia Woolf—is also a novel of manners. Not only the Ramsays and their observer Lily Briscoe but also of the other figures comprise a picture of middle class academic society at the beginning of the Georgian era. Characters are treated with the sharp satire and the eyes for the incongruous within prescribed conventions which is the heritages of Jane Austen. As in its traditional prototypes, the novel is set in a rambling summer-house where society can be depicted at leisure with ample opportunity for personal interaction. Charles Tansley, the 'atheist', blundering, aggressive, 'writing his dissertation is treated with pitiless satire at one moment and with warm insight at another. The fastidious bachel

William Bankes, is shown with excellent manners and his limited sensibility. On the other hand, old Mr. Carmichael, the social blunderer, emerges as a successful lyrical poet who alone can communicate with Lily Briscoe. This group is carefully devised as a satire portrait of the times, and of a particular way of life, but it also suggests a pattern of sensibilities illustrating the movement of the narrative. The dinner table, divided between husband and wife, acts as a magnetic field in which the members of his group are in continuous suspension, drawn hither and thither by either pole." Thus we may conclude by asserting that the depiction of this particular aspect of life is really a distinctive feature of this great novel.

To The Lighthouse : Characters as vehicle for ideas

Virginia Woolf discarded both the first person and the third person narration in her novel because she found the method of narration known as **multiple inner points of view** as the **best means to project her theme** in the novel. Therefore, the mental processes of the characters seem to be presented without any interference from the author. The external world is depicted through its reflection in the observing consciousness.

The effect of **this narrative mode is to force the reader to construct the world of the novel for himself and to apply his own judgments to that world**. While the omniscient narrator at one end of the scale of narration guides the reader carefully through the fictional world and the values by which that world is to be assessed, the multiple inner viewpoint of novel provides no certain or reliable 'truths' and forces the reader to become the novelist's active partner in creating the novel's fictional world. Another effect of this narrative mode is to concentrate the reader's attention on how characters experience events rather than on what is experienced.

Virginia Woolf's method of creating the characters in "To the Lighthouse" is a cumulative one. Our knowledge of the characters depends on the accumulated impressions of them we receive, both from their own reflections and observations and from the responses they elicit from the other characters.

In "To the Lighthouse" **The characters are used as a Vehicle** of Virginia Woolf's ideas. The reader is obliged to recreate for himself the characters of this novel. The opening section of the novel gives us a clear impression of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. The two, as they are presented here, provide a study in contrasts; Mrs. Ramsay is portrayed in images of softness and fertility — the fountain, the flowering fruit tree —while Mr. Ramsay is symbolised by the arid scimitar, the beak of brass. The husband-wife, male-female polarity of this opening section is a theme developed through the novel, and is reflected in the contrasting qualities of intellect possessed by both.

Mrs. Ramsay is **portrayed** as **possessing instinctive, intuitive intelligence**, while her husband's intellect is of the rational and orderly variety symbolised by his perception of human knowledge as a series of letters of the alphabet. To over-emphasise the symmetry of these characteristics is, however, to do an injustice to the complexity and suggestiveness of the novel's characterisation. These symbolic intimations of characters are part of a larger scheme of characterisation which provides a psychologically realistic

series of portraits. A fine example of the powerful juxtaposition of symbolic and realistic portraiture can be found in the description of Mrs. Ramsay as she sits with her husband after the dinner party. There is psychological realism in the description of her puzzling over her husband's desire for fame, and in the description of a mind drifting through association rather than logic from one idea to another.

As Mrs, Ramsay's is the dominating point of view in the early sections of the novel; the reader may easily be persuaded to take her side. She appears to represent feminity, maternity and sympathy, and we feel some aversion from the uncompromisingly severe truthfulness of Ramsay and Charles Tansley. Our sympathy is increased when we look through her eyes at her reflection in the mirror and see a fading beauty that is a model of unselfishness. This early limited version of her character and that of her husband is soon modified by her complex reflections about Charles Tansley, who arouses in her a mixture of maternal desire to please and protect and an equally strong feeling of repugnance based on his awkwardness.

Her attitude towards the young student reveals social condescension and snobbery. When her husband corrects her forecast of the weather, she responds with strong anger to what she feels is blindness to the feelings of others, and a sense of martyrdom and moral superiority. She dwells on their financial insecurity and her suspicion that his most recent book is not as successful as earlier ones. Another guest, Mr Carmichael, makes her feel uncomfortable because he makes no demands on her; her characteristic response is to feel pity for him. Yet she is aware of the ambiguity of her emotional response, however much she may try to evade personal responsibility.

She wishes to keep her youngest son and daughter in a state of perpetual childhood, and she admits to herself that she prefers 'boobies' to intelligent young men, for she can control children and boobies. This manipulative element in her character is alien to her perception of herself, and she is puzzled that Minta's mother should have accused her of alienating her daughter's affections. Mrs Ramsay defends herself from this accusation by direct reference to her appearance, to her fading beauty and to the shabbiness of her clothes, all of which are made to reflect her internal self-sacrifice as a kind of theatrical costume signifying goodness and thereby absolving her of hostile criticism.

Mrs Ramsay instinctively identifies herself with Lily the artist and with Carmichael the poet. Like them, she is a creator but her medium is human beings and her form, human relationships. The novel makes it clear that she is only partially successful in her art; the radiance of her dinner party may draw people together momentarily, but it is inevitably destroyed by time. Paul and Minta may have their courtship of intense happiness under her guidance, but time destroys their marriage. Mrs Ramsay's attempts to shield her children from the force; of mutability are defeated and she too is destroyed by her familiar antagonist, death.

The complexity of Mrs. Ramsay's character is revealed through her consciousness of reality and the language and images she uses to describe it. It is created also through her reflection in the eyes of the other characters. The three male guests-Tansley, Bankes and Carmichael show varying responses to her. Carmichael is emotionally self-sufficient and is aware of the degree of manipulation involved in Mrs. Ramsay's se

Bankes, Ramsay's long-time friend and colleague, responds to her mystery and beauty, but is also partially conscious of her destructive powers. Tansley also responds to her beauty but is even more attracted by her pity for him. The young couple, Paul and Minta, are completely under her spell and obey her wish that they should marry. The Ramsay children respond with love and with varying degrees of admiration, ranging from James who adores her unquestiongly, to Jasper who reflects that 'being his mother she lived away in another division of the world'.

Lily Briscoe's perception of Mrs. Ramsay and how she responds is more complex than any of the other characters. She is fully aware of her friend's ability to dominate through love and pity, but she also recognises her worth. Of all the characters in the novel, Lily is the one who fully grasps the ambiguities of her hostess' character and comes to love the whole Mrs. Ramsay. It is Lily who has the final vision of Mrs. Ramsay, and it is Lily who makes that vision permanent through her art. Mr. Ramsay is, in many respects, the direct antithesis of his wife. He loves her very deeply, but can still be infuriated by her disrespect for factual truth. His worship of truth matters more to him than the feelings of his friends and family. His intellectual integrity gives him a quality of aloofness, but this is deceptive for he loves and needs his family more than his seemingly emotional but inwardly withdrawn wife. Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay gives little thought to his effect on others; he stalks around the garden reciting poetry aloud, contemptuous of the responses of his family and guests. He makes overt demands on the sympathies and emotions around him. These traits are quite different from his wife's acute self-consciousness and her covert manipulation of others.

Like the character of Mrs. Ramsay, **Mr. Ramsay's is portrayed through his own consciousness and through the eyes of those who see him**. An apparently contradictory web of images surrounds him: he is hard and arid like a scimitar, cruel as a beak of brass that gorges upon his wife's energy and fertility. Yet he is also an intrepid explorer the sailor who travels where lesser mortals do not care. He is a loving, protective paterfamilias who responds with warmth to the sight of a mother hen and her chickens, and who can be overwhelmed by admiration for his wife.

The other characters, especially Bankes and Lily, flesh out the details of his portrait. Bankes remembers Ramsay as a young bachelor and, in accordance with Bankes' own emotional aridity, regrets the domestic and emotional aspects of Ramsay's life which he feels, have weakened his potential and destroyed their friendship. Yet Bankes envies his friend and sees him in a powerful image that combines elements of Ramsay's intellectual integrity and domestic affection as the father with the child on his shoulder, looking at a picture of in eruption, Lily is, once more, the most astute and balanced of the observers, noticing his single-minded fidelity to the truth as well as his egotistical pursuit of sympathy and admiration, while acknowledging his tenderness and courage. In Virginia Woolf's portrayal of Mrs. Ramsay following the dinner party we noted a balance between symbolism and realism in the very language and style of the novel. This equilibrium is apparent also in the depiction of the Ramsays as a couple. Their portrait is drawn in a manner which makes them credible in terms of psychological realism but they exist also as powerful, generalised symbols.

To The Lighthouse : Concept of Time

Virginia Woolf admitted that life reflected in fiction is not a regularly patterned universe with an objective existence; it is a state of mind. Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.

Because existence is not objective, it cannot be absolute. And even time, as thoroughly interwoven into the fiber of being, cannot be absolute itself. This is why all of Virginia Woolf's novels are, in one way or another, experiments upon the concept of time. Perhaps the most obvious is "Mrs. Dalloway", which envisions time as a complex interplay between the present experience and what remains in our minds in the form of memories. But other novels, like "To the Lighthouse", make use of the concept of time in a much deeper sense: they create an intricate temporal fabric that is meant to underline the destructive force of the universe, upon which the human being watches helplessly. "To the Lighthouse" is an elegy upon time and that is why time appears in such novels as a complex entity itself.

The Window

"To the Lighthouse" is made up of three distinct parts, each of which envisions time differently. In the first section, entitled "The Window," Virginia Woolf conceives of time as a matter of psychology rather than chronology. She creates what the French philosopher Henri Bergson termed durée, a conception of the world as primarily intuitive and internal rather than external or material. "The Window" deals with the minute details of a single afternoon and evening, stretching them out into a considerable piece of prose: we are able to follow the thoughts of the key figures of the Ramsays as they take care of their guests at the holiday house in the Hebrides. This is how we also realize that time itself is interiorized and seen different by the two protagonists, it is actually a mosaique of the different perceptions each of the guests at the house have. For Mr Ramsay, time is not forgiving. As a philosopher, he most fears for his popularity and that in the end, he will be forgotten under the thick veil of time:

And his fame lasts how long? It is permissible even for a dying hero to think before he dies how men will speak of him hereafter. His fame lasts perhaps two thousand years. And what are two thousand years?. What, indeed, if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare. His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two, and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still.

It seems that the only comfort he can find is not in knowledge, which seems relative and absurd, but in the surrendering to the soothing existence of his family:

Who shall blame him? Who will not secretly rejoice when the hero puts his armour off, and halts by the window and gazes at his wife and son, who, very distant at first, gradually come closer and closer, till lips and book and head are clearly before him, though still lovely and unfamiliar from the intensity of his isolation and the waste of ages and the perishing of the stars, and finally putting his pipe in his pocket and bending his

magnificent head before her—who will blame him if he does homage to the beauty of the world?

He considers their existence the only beauty of life, but is also embarrassed, as an intellectual individual, for his incapacity to fully admire the beauty of the world without remorse and with detachment.

Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand relies more on intuition than on intelligence in order to make sense of the world. She even admits that the intellectual air of the men around her (including her husband) is sometimes too tiring for her simple, yet beautiful and gracious mind: ″they were walking on and Mrs. Ramsay did not quite catch the meaning, only the words, here and there … dissertation … fellowship … readership … lectureship. She could not follow the ugly academic jargon, that rattled itself off so glibly.″ She accepts the passing of time just as well as she accepts the authoritative nature of her husband, because she knows she can make the world better with her beauty and give everything the air of rightfulness:

She went out of her way indeed to be friendly. She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty; she carried it erect into any room that she entered; and after all, veil it as she might, and shrink from the monotony of bearing that it imposed on her, her beauty was apparent. She had been admired. She had been loved. She had entered rooms where mourners sat. Tears had flown in her presence. Men, and women too, letting go to the multiplicity of things, had allowed themselves with her the relief of simplicity. It injured her that he should shrink. It hurt her. And yet not cleanly, not rightly. That was what she minded, coming as it did on top of her discontent with her husband;

But at the same time, there are things that startle her. First, it is the fact that some people are immune to her charms and accuse her of trying to impose a philosophy upon life on everyone. Then, there is the transactional level of life, the financial problems for example, that contrast so deeply with her natural, pervading beauty. And thirdly, it is her own fear that her children will grow up and lose the innocence of childhood. These are all signs that in the end time wins the fight, and that the temporary paralysis that happy moments instill is just a fleeting victory upon the inevitable nature of the universe.

Time passes

And indeed, in the second chapter of the novel, "Time Passes" Mrs. Ramsay is defeated and with her the narrative flow of the beautiful summer day is disrupted. Many of the characters from the first section disappear. In "Time Passes" time is fully objective and compresses an entire decade into barely twenty pages. Virginia Woolf chooses to portray the effects of time on objects like the house and its contents rather than on human development and emotion. "Time Passes" validates Lily's and the Ramsays' fears that time will bring about their demise, as well as the widespread fear among the characters that time will erase the legacy of their work. Here, everything from the garden to the prized Waverley novels slowly sinks into oblivion.

Because the focus shifts from psychology in "The Window" to chronology in "Time Passes," human beings become secondary concerns in the latter section of the novel. This effect replicates the anxieties that plague the characters. Mr. Ramsay's fear that there is little hope for human immortality is confirmed as Virginia Woolf presents the death of the novel's heroine in an unadorned aside:

[Mr Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]

What we learn of the central character in this brief section is presented as an aside, set apart by brackets. Here, Virginia Woolf starts to chart the relentless, cruel, and more conventional passage of time by adopting the tone of news bulletins and marching orders. The passage may well allude to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, a husband losing his wife at the gates of Hell.

This choice is remarkable on two levels. First, thematically, it skillfully asserts that human life is, in the natural scheme of things, incidental. Second, the offhand mention of Mrs. Ramsay's death challenges established literary tradition by refusing to indulge in conventional sentiment. The emotionally hyperbolic Victorian deathbed scene is absent for Mrs. Ramsay, and Virginia Woolf uses an extreme economy of words to report the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew.

In this section, the darkened tone that begins to register toward the end of "The Window" comes to the fore both literally and figuratively. Mrs. Ramsay's death constitutes the death of womanhood and the dismantling of domesticated power in the novel. With the deaths of Prue and Andrew, the world's best potential and best hope seem dashed. Prue's death in childbirth strikes out at beauty and continuity, while Andrew's demise brings out the impact of war and the stunting of masculine potential so important to the novel's historical context. In a way, the novel miniaturizes a vast historical moment for Europe as a whole. "Time Passes" brings to the Ramsays destruction as vast as that inflicted on Europe by World War I. When the Ramsays return to their summer home shaken, depleted, and unsure, they represent the postwar state of an entire continent.

The Lighthouse

In the final part of the novel, named "The Lighthouse", Virginia Woolf returns to the narrative technique of the first chapter, giving the time back its subjective nature. In fact, if we try to see the novel through the eyes of the young James, who wanted to go to the lighthouse in the first chapter, we realize that the writer wants to give the impression that only a day had passed. The short intermezzo chapter Time Passes has taken place during the night and now the morning finds the remaining characters returning at the house in the Hebrides.

Gently the waves would break (Lily heard them in her sleep); tenderly the light fell (it seemed to come through her eyelids). And it all looked, Mr Carmichael thought, shutting his book, falling asleep, much as it used to look.

But there is a fundamental difference between the time here and the time of the first chapter. If at first time was more of a sensorial perception, now time makes a different imprint upon the minds of the characters; it operates to forge the matter of memory, "leaf upon leaf." And we might say that memory, concretized, and does appear to James just as they enter into a strange proximity with the lighthouse that has lain for so long in imagination only.

"He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?"

The lighthouse that comes into view as they approach in the boat emerges as a solid, material object in contrast to the "silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye" that had sat nestled among "leaves and flowers" of "that happy world" of his past. Both are the lighthouse, he quickly decides, as Virginia Woolf insists on leaving open the ethics of memory and immediate experience to their inherent pluralisms:

"For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too"

Not only may memory be traced as a physical impression "folded" within, returned to as a material object, but in the middle of the novel Mrs. Ramsay imagines the past as something "sealed up" that one might return to through volition. During the climactic dinner party that occupies the exact center of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay takes brief moments out of her demanding role as orchestrator and unifier of the diverse needs of her guests to take respite in the past: "that dream land, that unreal but fascinating place, the Mannings' drawing-room at Marlow twenty years ago; where one moved about without haste or anxiety"

The past is "more real than the present" because it is available both to experience and re-experience – to understanding and to the enhanced re-cognition involved in knowing again. As Henri Bergson proposes in his 1911 lectures at Oxford, "We tend to represent the past as if it were non-existent"; while this is an "illusion," he claims, that is essential for life, it is "dangerous in the highest degree." Further, "the past makes a body with the present and continually creates with it." One's position toward the past is open both to the on-going becoming of the past, and to a stabilization of previous experience that the present cannot yet offer.

For Woolf – as for Freud – the intenser moments of the past leave palpable psychic and sensual remains, while memorialization itself, and especially writing of the past, becomes a way of approaching a temporality deepened by the past's enduring becoming.

Cubist Time

As a conclusion, in To the Lighthouse, Woolf approaches time with a near-cubist depiction. We end up with a triangle of temporality, with each aspect of past, present, and future often synchronically evoked. In retrospective, we could say that the second part, "Time Passes," works as a pure present, rendered with an acceleration of narrative time alongside a condensation of intensely lyrical prose; while we might think of the last

section, "The Lighthouse," as the pure, realized and realizable, future. This seems simple, but what is interesting is that in this text the present is always anticipating its future while registering the materiality of the past, while the future finds its meaning in enacting a similar return.

After Part One – which already through its title, "The Window," proposes a kind of vantage outlook to both space and time – the text changes its focus from futurity to anteriority, from hoping for a trip to the lighthouse, to alternately remembering and repressing the past and its original motherly figure. The novel as a whole bears the pressure of answering to the intensely pure willed, desiring "I" of James as a six-year old boy. From the moment when James's desire – with all the profound metaphorical significance this yearning implies (we wonder if James does not want to go to the root of symbol or to the heart of metaphor itself in wanting to go "to the lighthouse") – is refused, his delighted fervour is transformed into a memory of thwarted desire.

Mr. Ramsay : The Two-Dimensional Character

In the novel, To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf illustrates the character of Mr. Ramsay, a husband and father of eight children. As a husband, he degrades and mentally abuses his wife, Mrs. Ramsay, and as a father, he disparages and psychologically injures his children. Yet, Mr. Ramsay has another side -- a second dimension. He carries the traits of a very compassionate and loving husband and a securing and nurturing father. Although Woolf depicts Mr. Ramsay as crude, brusque, and insensitive, he, nonetheless, desires happiness and welfare for his family.

Even though Mr. Ramsay frequently scolds and denounces Mrs. Ramsay, he still seeks happiness and comfort for his wife. For example, after Mrs. Ramsay lies to James about the next day's weather, "He [Mr. Ramsay] stamped his foot on the stone step. 'Damn you,' he said." (31) Mr. Ramsay devastates his wife's emotions. Because of a little lie, the temperamental Mr. Ramsay hurts, if not kills, Mrs. Ramsay's emotions. Still, right after the incident, Mr. Ramsay self-reflects and "[he was] ashamed of that petulance [that he brought to his wife]." (32) Mr. Ramsay understands and regrets the sorrow he brought on Mrs. Ramsay. He sympathizes with her and is "ashamed" for what he had done. Mr. Ramsay wants to appease his wife and make her happy as a result of the torment that he inflicted on her. Next, Woolf again illustrates Mr. Ramsay's insensitive dimension when Mr. Ramsay makes Mrs. Ramsay "bend her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked." (32) Mr. Ramsay is heartless to his wife's feelings; it is as if he enjoys "drenching" Mrs. Ramsay and enjoys seeing her in mental anguish. However, Woolf later contrasts the callous Mr. Ramsay with a more sensitive and caring Mr. Ramsay:

So stiffened and composed the lines of her face in a habit of sternness that when her husband passed… he could not help noting, the sternness at the heart of her beauty. It saddened him, and her remoteness pained him. (64)

Therefore, here Mr. Ramsay is portrayed as a sympathetic and caring husband that is "pained" by the expression of sorrow on his wife's face. Mr. Ramsay is sensitive to his wife's feelings and desires her well-being. Woolf illustrates the inconsistency of Mr. Ramsay's character through his and Mrs. Ramsay's interactions.

Next, Woolf portrays Mr. Ramsay as a brusque and callous father by his harsh interactions with his children, when his true motive is to help and secure his children's welfare. Mr. Ramsay is depicted as a father whom, "had there been an axe, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in [Mr. Ramsay's] breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it," because of the Mr. Ramsay's constant, pessimistic rambling, "it won't be fine." (4) Mr. Ramsay is depicted as a sharp, deadly, and sarcastic killjoy that destroys the anticipation and happiness of his child, James. His children regard him with the utmost rancor that they even think of stabbing him to death. However, little do his children know that, "he [Mr. Ramsay] was incapable of untruth; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure… of any human being, least of all of his own children, who… should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; [he would instill] courage, truth, and the power to endure." (4) The main purpose for his bluntness is not to intentionally hurt his children, but instead to strengthen them. He wants his children to grow up as successful, self-sufficient people. Thus, even though Mr. Ramsay does have a crude dimension in his character, he also has a second dimension of sensibility.

Virginia Woolf pictures the character of Mr. Ramsay as an authentic human being; he has a second-dimension that allows him to have both evil and sincere attributes. She does not write about either a very humble and generous man or a very insolent and cruel man; instead, Woolf gives the readers a real character with both traits that allow readers to understand the foibles of characters like Mr. Ramsay.

Mrs. Ramsay : A powerful Charter alive & dead

Introductory Remarks: - Mrs. Ramsay, one of the finest creations of Virginia Woolf, is without the least shade of doubt the central figure around which action and movement in To The Lighthouse is built. She is definitely radiating through the entire novel and impregnating all the other characters, major or minor. From the very beginning of the novel, structurally or psychologically, she is the cohesive force and the source of unity in it. In fact the first part of the novel is completely dominated by the towering personality of this great lady. It is none but Mrs. Ramsay who holds together almost all the divergent characters and the various incidents of the novel. All the characters of the novel have gathered at the summer house of the Ramsays in the Isle of Skye. All have their own inhibitions and idiosyncrasies and hence are incapable of establishing a rapport with one another. So she has to provide a cohesive force to bring the scattered stones together and to carve out a unified structure.

Mrs. Ramsay: the Opening Scene: - In the very opening scene of the novel the focus is in on Mrs. Ramsay. She serves as the model for Lily Briscoe as is found sitting at the window that links the lawn with the interior. People come and people may go, but Mrs. Ramsay's part is like that of a milestone in movement of various characters. Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley are first to come to Mrs. Ramsay. And Mrs. Ramsay's impressions about them, as revealed in her stream of consciousness, fill out the scene for the readers. Then Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe come within the range of her vision. So Mrs. Ramsay becomes the centre around which all seem to be moving. A large variety of people with all their ideas and idiosyncrasies take part in this novel. And the most remarkable thing is that Mrs. Ramsay with her great tact, sympathy and understanding holds them all together.

The Dinner Party: Mrs. Ramsay's Unifying Force: - Mrs. Ramsay's great role as a unifying and cohesive force is superbly revealed to us at the dinner party that forms the climax of the first movement of To The Lighthouse. In this sense she performs very creditably her duty of connecting the different individuals. And for this she has also to engage herself with some of them. Lily and Charles Tansley are at opposite poles. Her look falls on Tansley and she strongly feels :

"Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it,..."

Hence we find Mrs. Ramsay, simply by a look, compelling Lily to be considerate to Tansley. Thus she tactfully intervenes and Tansley is brought out of his isolation. He gets the required attention to make him feel at ease. Next Mr. Carmichael is also brought out of himself by the beauty of that 'yellow and purple dish of fruit' placed on the middle of the table. Even old Mr. Bankes, who thinks it to be a terrible waste of time to attend such dinners, feels elated and reconciled after hearing from her that he has just relished a French recipe of her grandmother's. Thus it is clearly revealed to us that 'the whole effort of the merging and flowing and creating rested on her'.

Mrs. Ramsay's Warmth and Compassion: - An emblem of Mrs. Ramsay's compassion or power to heal is the 'nurse carrying a light across a dark room' assuring a cross or fractious child; the light here stands for what Mrs. Ramsay has it in her power to give to others. A similar kind of emblem is used by Mrs. Ramsay herself in her reflection on her own beauty and ability to succeed with people: 'She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty'. The 'light' here is that quality to attract people which people respond to, and through which they find access to her compassion. The warmth and brightness of Mrs. Ramsay's 'light' creates the 'circle of 'life' into which she can take her husband and make him secure. It fills the house too as she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow'. It is responsible too for the almost golden world of the Ramsay children, or of the childhood which she fosters and cherishes. So she creates a sun-filled world, though it has its shadows. And in her world she wants men and women to be united and become fruitful like herself. She offers her protection to all. At the intellectual level she offers her protection and inspiration to both science and art—to Lily Briscoe the painter, to Bankes the botanist, to Carmichael the poet, to Tansley the scholar and above all to her husband the philosopher. Thus she seems to have the whole of the other sex under her protection. For all this some critics suggest that Mrs. Ramsay may rather be taken as a symbol of the female principle in life.

Two Kinds of Truth and Mrs. Ramsay: - James Hafley has rightly remarked:

"To The Lighthouse is really the story of a contest between two kinds of truth—Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. For him truth is factual truth; for her truth is the movement towards truth; since truth is always being made, and never is made, the struggle for truth is the truth itself. The form of this novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay's truth. According to Bergson, certainty can follow only from factual extension of knowledge resulting in scientific order, such is the order which Mr. Ramsay sees."

So it is evident that Mr. Ramsay's is a logical scientific procedure toward truth.

"Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, knows by intuition rather than analysis and is, therefore, able to know reality-mobility, qualitative rather than quantitative diversity, time instead of space, movement itself and not merely the path of movement in space."

This shows that Mrs. Ramsay knows that feeling for others consideration and sympathy, are the eternal truths which never perish like the scientific and matter of fact truth which her husband seeks. That is why we find that ultimately Mr. Ramsay's truth—factual truth—is short-lived and Mrs. Ramsay's truth, which is the movement towards truth, prevails in the long run, in fact the second and final movement of To The Lighthouse clearly establishes that it is none but Mr. Ramsay 'had blundered' and Mrs. Ramsay's intuition in spite of its apparent illogicality has triumphed.

"Time Passes": Testing of Mrs. Ramsay's Truth: - "Time Passes," the second part of the novel, has been hailed as a masterpiece of description, probably unsurpassed in twentieth century English prose. But, in fact it is actually the testing of Mrs. Ramsay's vision by Mr. Ramsay's facts, and the apparent triumph of those facts, During the ten years' time everything seems to be slowly gravitating towards inevitable doom and destruction. "But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched…..They come with their brooms and pails at last, they get to work." And slowly some rusty laborious birth seems to take place. And the birth brings the house back to what it was and we find the Ramsays, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Carmichael back to the old summer-house after a lapse of ten years. The long night is over. And though she is no more in the land of the living, it reveals the ultimate triumph of Mrs. Ramsay's illusions.

Dominates even after Death: - The dominating personality and the imposing physical presence of Mrs. Ramsay is felt by us only in the first part of To The Lighthouse. In the second part all of a sudden we find: "Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out, they remained empty." Even then she pervades the whole book. Her influence on the important characters, especially on Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay, is really very significant. In the final movement of the novel Mrs. Ramsay is constantly presented through Lily Briscoe's consciousness, and her full significance as a uniting force is clearly revealed. It is the apparition of this great lady, at the same window in the same summer-house, which enables Lily Briscoe to complete her picture after a lapse of ten years. And at the very same moment Mr. Ramsay, who under-took the journey to the lighthouse with Cam and James to fulfil one of Mrs. Ramsay's cherished wishes, lands at his destination. This shows how Mrs. Ramsay dead is more powerful than Mr. Ramsay living.

Conclusion: - So in the last part of the novel it is clearly revealed to us that it is Mrs. Ramsay who is right and not Mr. Ramsay. And her 'lies' are proved to be the truth that can refute Mr. Ramsay's 'facts'. Mrs. Ramsay's feeling for others, consideration and sympathy are the eternal truths — truths that never perish like the scientific and matter-of-fact truth sought by Mr. Ramsay.

The theme of "To The Lighthouse" is concerned with subject and object and Nature of reality

Introductory: Different Interpretations: - "To The Lighthouse" is, without any shade of doubt, a very complex novel having different interpretations from different critics. There is a general agreement that "To The Lighthouse" centres on questions of general order and chaos, male and female, permanence and change and intellection and intuition, the critics are far from unanimous in the actual tracing out of these themes. Thus, for example, it is clear that the simultaneous completion of Lily Briscoe's painting and arrival of Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam at the Lighthouse are somehow functioning together to complete the book, but no two critics have agreed as to what the function means as an ending of what has gone before. One claims that Mr. Ramsay is undergoing a transition from his former intellectual personality to a newly discovered intuitive view, while another critic says that Lily is moving from a concern with form, that is art, to a concern with content, that is life. Another critic sees in the ending a shift from time to the timeless, while a fourth one sees here a shift from egotism to selflessness, and a fifth critic thinks of this simultaneous convergence as a clumsy device which solves no problem."

We can multiply such examples, but it is evident that the dominant tendency is to interpret the thematic conflict—whatever it may be—as an antithesis to two mutually exclusive terms, one of which must be rejected in favour of the other. In fact, the full significance of the trip to the Lighthouse is not grasped. It is, more or less, seen as a one way affair. But a closer study of the novel will reveal that this either-or strategy is hardly adequate for dealing with the multiplicity of points of view through which each character is seen in the first section, the descending and the ascending movement of the second section and the shifting simultaneity of events which shape the third.

Relation of Self to Others: - It is mainly the first part of the novel that deals with the relation of self to others. Very soon it becomes clear that not one single trait or characteristic of a person can be seized upon and cherished in order to know him or her. Mrs. Ramsay for instance, is really a warm and beautiful woman, yet annoyingly concerned with ordering the lives of others. And this is quite clear from the resentment which many of her circles express against her mania for marriage. She is, no doubt, maternal.

Mr. Ramsay: - Next, let us take the example of Mr. Ramsay. Often he shows himself as a self-dramatising domestic tyrant, but still he is to be admired as a lone watcher at the dark frontiers of human ignorance. He is, no doubt, a detached and a lonely philosopher, yet he cannot but crave the contact of his wife and children. He is grim, yet optimistic, austere, yet fearful for his reputation; petty and selfish, and yet capable of losing himself completely in a novel of Scott; alert, yet he thrives on the simple company and the humble fare of fishermen.

Lily and Others: - In the same way Lily Briscoe is also a complex figure. She is a spinster disinterested in ordinary sexual attachment; she is nevertheless capable of a fierce outburst of love. She is, no doubt, an artist perpetually terrified by a blank canvas

but still she is able to find a solution to the complex problem of art-life relationship. In the same way Mr. Bankes, Mr. Tansley, all are double beings or complex figures of the novel. And we find that the climax of the first section occurs at the dinner, a brilliantly dramatic communion meal where each ordinary ego, with its petty aggression and resentment, is gradually blended with the others into a pattern of completion and harmony. Thus it is clear that double vision or multiple perspective is very much necessary to know and understand human personality. And in this section we are able to have just such a perspective, as each character is presented from at least two points of view.

Man to Nature: - We have seen how in the first section the relation of self to others has been dealt with. And Part II of the novel deals with the relation of man to nature. It does not portray merely the ravages of time and tide affecting the Ramsay family and their summer house. In addition the almost complete destruction of the house, we have also a chance to see its equally dramatic renewal. And then it is seen that its focus is on the comic-epic figure of Mrs. McNab, who lurches through the house wiping and dusting, breaking into a long dirge of sorrow and trouble, yet who feels, 'looking sideways in the glass, as if after all, she had some consolation, as if indeed there were twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope'. Thus, it is she and her two helpers, Mrs. Bast and her son, who fetch up from oblivion all the Waverly novels, and who rescue the house from impending doom and destruction.

Further, we find in this very section that the fortunes of the Ramsay family suffer so many setbacks. Mrs. Ramsay dies unexpectedly, Andrew is killed in the battlefield in France, and Prue dies of childbirth. Even then we are made to understand that Mr. Ramsay's work will endure, for the fate of his books was somehow tied up with the Waverly novels. Also, as the next section proceeds to demonstrate the family continues to develop. Thus it is clearly evident that section two or the central section of this great novel, therefore, demonstrates not the victory of natural chaos over human order, but rather the reverse. Man's power and will to live ultimately prevail over death and destruction.

Relation of Art to life: - Now, in the third section of the To The Lighthouse, the third level of the theme, the relation of art to life is treated. We find that the structure of this section is based upon the shuttling back and forth between Lily on the island and those in the boat watching the island, who in turn get further away. This is accompanied by the corresponding movement of those in the boat getting closer to the Lighthouse and Lily gelling closer to the solution of her aesthetic problem. And it must be noted that the determining factor in each case is love (the art of life), which might perhaps be defined as order or the achievement of form in human relations through the surrender of personality. Hence we find Lily brushing her painting as she feels the upsurge of that sympathy for Mr. Ramsay, which she had previously been stubbornly unable to give. James and Cam give up their longstanding antagonism towards their father. Mr. Ramsay, himself, at the same time, attains a resolution of his own tensions and worries. The point is not that they have made a one dimensional transition from this to that attitude, but that, since each is aware simultaneously both of what is receding and what is approaching, each has received in his way a sense of double vision.

Double Vision through Imagery: - A closer look at the imagery of the book, its figure of speech, its scene and plot may further demonstrate the presence of this double vision. To begin with, the Lighthouse itself as the most conspicuous image functions in two ways as something to be reached, and as source of flashing light. This means has a symbolic role to play. As a source of light, it appears in two connections, first, as it impinges upon the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay in the first section after she had finished reading to James, and second, as it flashes upon the empty house in section two.

Thus we find that Mrs. Ramsay, the busy mother of eight children often feels the need 'to be silent, to be alone. Often she muses upon the alternating flashes of light in a mood of detachment, peace and rest. And this musing gives her a sense of victory over life, and she identifies herself with the third stroke—the long steady stroke—which becomes for her an image of purity and truth, of strength and courage, searching and beautiful. Her self, having shed its attachments, was free for the strongest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless ... Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir, and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this serenity, and pausing there she looked out to meet the stroke, of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three which was—her stroke.'

Now this can be taken as the thesis of her emotional cycle, the antithesis is evoked as her mood soon changes into one of the grim recognition of inevitable facts of 'suffering, death, the poor', and she gradually descends from her state on triumphant freedom from the fact, the hurry and the stir by seizing upon the light from a different perspective, 'for when one woke, all one's relation changed'. Looking now at the light, it is the remorseless, the pitiless.

Reconciliation of Opposites: - Then it is found that only when these two moods become reconciled, will the cycle be complete. The second view seems 'so much here, yet so little hers', and then her meditations are crowned in their third phase by 'exquisite happiness, intense happiness', and she cries out, 'It is enough. It is enough'. It seems to be apparent that by seeing the long steady flash of light in two different aspects—as an image of expansion and release and, then, as an image of contraction and confinement, she has received the final intuition of the truth about the nature of reality. And this intuition is that one must be both subjectively involved, and objectively detached from life, and that true happiness rests neither in the one sphere nor in the other exclusively, but in achieving a harmonious balance, however fragile, between the two. Now she can rest contented, if only for a moment.

The second part or the middle section of the novel portrays the death and rebirth of the decaying and deserted house. Here the light makes its second appearance by gliding over the rooms gently as if it laid its cares arid lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again. It is clear from the sentence which follows immediately that this is one side of doubleness. 'But in the very lull of the loving caress as the long stroke leant upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder; another fold of the shawl loosened; there it hung, and swayed'. And a few pages on, just before the arrival of the forces of renewal in the house, in 'that moment, that hesitation when dawn trembles and night p

Lighthouse beam as an image of expansion and release (life-love-hope) and contraction and confinement (death-destruction-terror) held in relation, entered the room for a moment, 'sent its sudden stare over bed and wall in the darkness of winter looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw.' So we find that the three moods—loving care, tearing apart and equanimity are well represented by the light, It may now be asserted that only by going through the opposing experience or multiple perspective one can get a comprehensive view of life.

Lily's Experience: Doubleness of Reality: - In the third section of the novel, Lily's brush descends in stroke after stroke when she begins her painting for a second time. 'And so pausing and so flickering she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the stroke another, and all were related. 'Thus, in each of the lighthouse beam itself, her vision begins to emerge in stroke and pause in alternation, and 'the truth, the reality which suddenly laid hands upon her emerged stark at the back of appearance and commanded her attention'. In other words, as the light flickers, as it goes and comes back, Lily begins to see the course that her painting was to take. This flicker, which to an ordinary observer is an endless dull repetition, holds Lily's mind and enables her to discover the truth and reality that the appearance signifies to her. The stroke and pause of the Lighthouse beam symbolise the problem of subject and object and the perception of nature of reality. Hence it may be concluded that reality has always a doubleness; and this can be understood only through a double vision.

Subject, Object and Native of Reality: - We find this phrase—subject and object and the nature of reality—in the first part of To The Lighthouse. Andrew Ramsay has used this phrase in answer to a question from Lily Briscoe about the content of his father's books. And the words are significant and have underlying meaning also. In fact it is exactly this problem which works its way through the novel on three perceptible levels—human relations, metaphysics and aesthetics. The novel can be seen to have been built around the problem of how the knower looks at the known, how one person looks at another, how man looks at nature and how the artist looks at life. These points have been discussed in detail in the foregoing paragraphs. We have shown how the main characters of To The Lighthouse look at the world in various ways. In fact three specific ways of seeing the object can be examined in To The Lighthouse through the eye of the artist (Lily Briscoe) through the eye of a child (James Nancy and Cam), and through the feminine creative eye of Mrs. Ramsay, whose vision might be solid to be that of a poet. Hence the characters see themselves and the world differently and very often bring the objective world into subjective consciousness.

Conclusion: - To understand life and the nature of reality the need of double vision is essential. We may now conclude with the very apt comments of Norman Friedman on this point: "A right understanding is achieved by those who try to understand the nature of reality simultaneously from two different stand points—subjective and objective—through which one must pass in making the transition from one perspective to the other. From whatever view point we regard life, whether it be that of a detached philosopher ironically contemplating from a height' or that of the busy mother and the house wife frantically involved in the fever and fret of daily routine, one must give it up in favour of the other, becoming immersed in the waters of transition and emerging with a double perspective (synthesis). In

involvement in life and a certain detachment from it are necessary to understand it fully. Doing only one of the two would naturally give a partial view of a life, which can be quite misleading. One has to strike a balance, to lose which is to give way to the chaos, of a black and lovely darkness on the one side, and to the disorder of a terrifying and senseless force on the other."

To The Lighthouse : Virginia Woolf's lyricism

Introductory remarks: - To rigidly define the form of a lyrical novel is rather a baffling task. A lyrical novel is a blend of lyrical poetry and the novel in the usual sense. In it the usual scenery of fiction becomes a texture of imagery. It also shifts the reader's attention from men and events to a formal design. It has generally a poetic style. But this is not all. Any novel may rise to such great heights of language or present its narrative in imagery.

In fact the most important and distinguishing feature of a novel of this genre is that it transcends the casual and temporal movement of narrative within the framework of fiction. It rather uses the novel to perform the function of a poem. For such a novel it is not a matter of prime importance to reproduce external life truthfully. It discards the method of achieving objectivity through the dramatic and narrative form of the traditional novel, but combines the world in a strongly inward, yet an aesthetically objective norm. Thus its form is neither dramatic nor didactic, but poetic in the limited sense of being lyrical. And, generally speaking, a lyric is a short poem which a single emotion, usually personal, is expressed, although originally it was intended to be sung with the lyre. So it is musical and at the same time subjective, as it is built round a single mood, emotion or impression.

Mrs. Woolf and Lyrical Novel: - Virginia Woolf was in quest of a meditative form through which she could convey simultaneously a picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of mind. In fact her essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mr. Brown opened the door of the novel to fresh conventions, foreshadowing a lyrical manner for the English novel through the conversion of characters and scenes into symbolic imagery. She sought to convey inner life and she realised that this could be best done in a lyrical manner. Finding that the conventional novel of motives and environment had proved insufficient she has suggested in one of her famous essays that its form should be such that it provides like poetry 'the outline rather than details, and stands further back from life in order to achieve the symbolic distance of impersonality.'

Lyrical Method: - Ralph Freedman has pointed out that in Virginia Woolf's search for a form in which the inner and the outer can be combined, she conceived of the moment as a concentration of the manifold elements of life into significant images or scenes. In addition to the literary use the moments also serve the epistornological function of clarifying the implication of consciousness for the artist's experience of life, a version of the imagination. In fact, for Virginia Woolf the inner and the outer are included in a single whole. The thing is that consciousness combines disparate elements and form; these elements thus combined, the moment moves to associations and memories which expand perceptions into scenes. But when the perceptions are being expanded into

scenes, the consciousness always remains aware of the objects which feed its cognition, and realizes that for the time being these things are freed from their time-bound existance. So we find that Mrs. Woolf's lyrical narrative is based on a design in which various contents of consciousness are juxtaposed. David Daiches has rightly remarked that the method is to 'distil a significance out of the data discovered by the personal sensibility and by projecting that significance through the minds of others, to maintain an unstable equilibrium between lyrical and narrative art.' And the unstable equilibrium between the lyrical and narrative art shows how Virginia Woolf brilliantly achieves the telescoping of the poet's lyrical self and the novelist's omniscient point of view. For Mrs. Woolf, poetry is a symbolic relationship between the individual self and its range of experience. So we find that the omniscient self of the poet-novelist is crucial to her concept of lyrical novel.

Poetic Prose: - We already know that Virginia Woolf's aim was to convey inner life, to display life as an aspect and function of the mind. And she realised that the resources of ordinary prose were really inadequate for this purpose. Hence she had to adopt a very peculiar, a very individual style. Hers is a poetic style with poetic rhythms, repetitions and poetic imagery. We find her using vivid symbols and metaphors which carry a complex aura of associations and emotions just to enable her to enhance the expressiveness of the language. Hence her style becomes superbly allusive and suggestive. Rhythms, assonances, cadences and poetic refrains are the distinctive features of her poetic prose. R.L. Chamber's apt remarks regarding this aspect of her style is worth noting: "This prose that approximates to poetry is not a spurious or hybrid form, but a genuine and legitimate medium of expression in its own right. Virginia Woolf is in a great tradition, which includes the names of Plato and John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne and the translators of the authoriscal version of the Bible. Furthermore it is a fact that by writing a poetic prose, by borrowing from the technique of poetry, while retaining the essential prose rhythms, all these writers exercised a true artistic insight into the possibilities and limitations of their medium. They realised the enormous advantage that was to be had for their purpose in shunning as far as possible that extreme pole of prose. Virginia Woolf realised this better than anyone else who was writing prose in her time."

"Time Passes" Its Lyricism: - The poetical character or the lyric note of Virginia Woolf's style is fully in evidence in the lyrical nature of Part II entitled, Time Passes in her To The Lighthouse. Jean Guiguet has very nicely dealt with a very beautiful analysis of the lyrical aspect of this chapter. The lyrical character of the "Time Passes" has been compared with the opening of chapter 5 of Orland.

In these two passages Mrs. Woolf treats of her favourite theme, 'this impersonal thing, the flight of time. 'She has taken recourse to the same cosmic elements which bring about change-wind, water, light, shade, conceived of as mysterious powers, as an army of goblins attacking objects one by one to corrode them, to transform them, disintegrate them. Whether night in invading the Ramsays' house or rainy gales assaulting the whole of England, the change of scale is scarcely noticeable, for the proportions of the opposing forces remain the same : man and his world on the one hand, and on the other the elfin army, unseen and immeasurable. The vision is the same in both cases.

The Lyricism is Impersonal: - In Time Passes the lyricism is essentially personal or subjective, hence doubts have been expressed if the lyrical quality of this chapter in this novel is genuinely lyrical. So Jean Guiguet has discussed this point in great detail. There is no character, no individual consciousness, no voice uttering the poetic words. There is only a scene taking place independent of any spectators, life pursuing its course independent of any living being. Is this depersonalization not antagonistic to the very essence of lyricism? If by lyricism we mean the expression of exalted feelings, as in Shakespeare's sonnets, the Immortality Ode or Epipsychidion, it rather becomes difficult to accept 'Time Passes' as a lyric. Nevertheless the presence of an 'I' of an individual consciousness as the seat of such feelings, is perhaps only an accidental element in lyricism, a literary convention and all things considered, a superficial characteristic. In the poems above mentioned, we are scarcely concerned with the 'I', which has no distinct features and is only the transparent support for the emotion—love, anguish, nostalgia, aspiration —which is the real substance of the poem. That Virginia Woolf did away with this support is not surprising; it follows logically from her principles.

Abstraction in this Lyricism: - Evidently there is a degree of abstraction in this lyricism. Facing the cosmos, thinking about it and enduring it, we have only the anonymous human beings 'we', 'one', whoever', the indefinite subject of an infinitive verb. This degree of abstraction appears to be a characteristic of one aspect of Virginia Woolf's lyricism. Without passing through the intermediary of any individual experience it attempts to render directly the relations between the man and the universe. These are thus reduced to their most elementary form. The themes of traditional lyricism, nature, love and death are convenient labels for those fundamental complexities of which each poet creates his characteristic variant or blend. They are, in fact, so many questions without intelligible answer, whose mystery the artist tries to prove obliquely by means of a whole system of transpositions, whose evocative value and whose load of symbolism are destined to act on the sensibility and intelligence of the reader, so as to convey to him the inexpressible reality. And the two questions that absorbed Virginia Woolf and provided the matter for her lyric outbursts are the same as those which she asked and tried to answer under all the forms with which her art experimented in turn: time and—personal identity. They are complementary to such an extent that one cannot be contemplated without the other.

Abstraction made Concrete and Perceptible: - It is really creditable for Virginia Woolf to succeed in giving body and substance to what abstract thought had devitalized. She apprehends time in the form of the changes it brings about, just as an artist is recognised through his creation. But change is also an abstraction to make it concrete and perceptible to the sense, it is necessary to expand the present until it contains the past too, and to insert, between the two limits, mobility, or rather mutation, which includes permanence within change. And Jean Guiguet has pointed out that the opening of sections 3 and 9 of part I is quite significant in this connection.

"But what after all is one night? A short space, especially when the darkness dims so soon, and so soon a bird sings, a cock crows, or a faint green quickens, like a turning leaf, in the hollow of the wave. Night, however, succeeds night. The winter holds a pack of them in store and deals them equally evenly, with indefatigable fingers. They lengthen; they darken."

"The house was left, the house was deserted. It was left like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grams now that life had left it. The long night seemed to have set in; the trifling airs nibbling, the clammy breaths fumbling seemed to have triumphed. The saucepan had rusted and the mat decayed. Toads had nosed their way Idly aimlessly, the swaying shall swung to and fro."

There is not a verb here, either standing alone or modified by an adverb, which fails to indicate some alteration: yet at the same time, under the change of aspect, of colour, of texture, we feel the enduring nature of night, of the house, of the wave, of the breeze, the saucepan or the shawl. This seems to be a description, although distended by time and undermined by mutability; but that which is describable, that which is seen, is only a means of expressing the indescribable, the invisible, that is contained within it. Surely this is described and precisely that abstract-concrete reality so necessary to Virginia Woolf. These images and sensations, merging together in the synthesis of an inner landscape over and above all their plastic value, have a lyrical quality or symbolic power which makes them linger in the mind.

Words with Double Aspect: - It has also been explained that all the words in the two passages have a double aspect, night, the wave, the grain of salt, the wind, the toad, rust—these are agents of decay and destruction, the forces of time warning against the forces of life: the bird, the leaf, the house, the shawl...And so such passages expand into abstraction without a break, imperceptibly: the words, ruin, corruption, oblivion, insensibility of nature, which occur later are associated with so many images and sensations that they take on fresh life, an almost physical content. Meditation is superimposed on things seen, and it does not obliterate it, rather recalls it constantly. A few lines indeed can give no idea of the richness and artistry of these pages, in which words invoke and answer one another from one paragraph to the next, while awakening distant echoes from the book's truest horizons. Their music moreover, adds to their incantatory power and perfects their poetic character.

Conclusion: - Virginia Woolf undoubtedly chose prose for her medium of expression, but her prose is a poetic-prose, 'prose that approximates to poetry'. In spite of her great achievements she is, in fact, not the originator of 'the stream of consciousness' novel in England. Dorothy Richardson precedes her as the Path-finder. But she fully deserves the credit for poetising and musicalising the novel of subjectivity. Allusions and images, rhythm, refrain and metaphors all these combine to make Virginia Woolf's style poetic. The great novels of Virginia Woolf not only reveal the stream of consciousness of their characters but flow like a stream themselves soothing our soul with its musical murmur.

"To the Lighthouse" : Virginia Woolf's as a Novelist

Introduction: - Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an English novelist, essayist, biographer, and feminist. Woolf was a prolific writer, whose modernist style changed with each new novel. Her letters and memoirs reveal glimpses of Woolf at the center of English literary culture during the Bloomsbury era. Woolf represents a historical moment when art was integrated into society, as T.S. Eliot describes in his obituary for Virginia.

"Without Virginia Woolf at the center of it, it would have remained formless or marginal…With the death of Virginia Woolf; a whole pattern of culture is broken."

Virginia Woolf broke free from tradition; she had also to discard the current form of the novel. But then she was driven to invent her own technique which would express her own vision of life. Her formula for the novel was not humanity in action but in a state of infinite perception. The novel in her hands is not just an entertainment, or propaganda, or the vehicle of some fixed ideas or theories, or a social document, but a voyage of exploration to find out how life is lived, and how it can be rendered as it is actually lived without distortion. She concentrates her attention on the rendering of inner reality and gives subtle and penetrating inlets into the consciousness of her characters. She cares very little for narrating dramatic events.

The World of outer Reality not ignored: - It is to be noted that because her **main purpose as a novelist is to depict inner** life of human beings, she **has not ignored the world of outer reality**, the warm and palpable life of nature. In fact, in her novels we find that the metaphysical interest is embodied in purely human and personal terms that the bounding line of art remains unbroken, that the concrete images which are the very stuff of art are never sacrificed to abstraction, but are indeed more in evidence than in the work of such writers as Bennett and Wells. The essential subject matter of her novels is no doubt the consciousness of one or more characters, but the outer life of tree and stream, of bird and fish, of meadow and seashore crowds in upon her and lends her image after image, a great, sparkling and many-coloured world of sight and scent and sound and touch.

Emergence of an Art Form: - In Virginia Woolf's novels we find a rare artistic integrity and they display a well-developed sense of form. To communicate her experience she had to invent conventions as rigid as or more rigid than the old ones that she discarded. And this she does in her best novels of the middle and the final period—Mrs. Dalloway, To The Lighthouse, The Waves and Between the Acts. In each case a small group of people is selected, and through their closely interrelated experience the reader receives his total impression. We also find that in each case certain images, phrases and symbols bind the whole together. So there are certain resemblances between them in structure or style. Apart from these general resemblances each of these novels is a fresh attempt to solve the problems raised by the departure from traditional conventions. So it is observed that each of her novels grows out of the preceding one and we see the germ of her later works in their predecessors.

Poetisation of the English Novel: - One of the most outstanding achievements of Virginia Woolf is that she represents the poetisation and musicalisation of English novel. Among the English novelists she is foremost in lyrical technique. She sets out on a quest for a mediating form through which she could convey simultaneously picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of minds. She aimed at conveying inner life and this could be best done in a lyrical manner. Hence it is found that in order to enrich her language, she used vivid metaphors and symbols which are peculiar to poetry. Her language is the language of poetry; her prose style has the assonances, the refrains, the rhythms and the accents of poetry itself. Virginia Woolf's lyrical narrative is

design on which various contents of consciousness are juxtaposed. The equilibrium between the lyrical and narrative art shows how Virginia Woolf brilliantly achieves the telescoping of the poet's lyrical self and the novelist's omniscient point of view. It is a case of unified sensibility, that is, a blending of the objective and the subjective, which is considered to be the best form of poetry particularly in modern poetry. Virginia Woolf's "To The Lighthouse" shows her lyricism in a superb manner and Time Passes', the second part of this novel, has been described by the novelist herself as particularly representative of her lyric vein.

The Interior Monologue—Stream of Consciousness Technique: - To the novelists of the new school of human consciousness is a chaotic welter of sensations and impressions; it is fleeting, trivial and evanescent. According to Virginia Woolf, the great task of the novelist should be **'to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit'.** His main business is just to reveal the sensations and impressions to bring us close to the quick of the mind. He should be more concerned with inner reality rather than outer. This is what is known as 'the stream of consciousness technique'. We are introduced into interior life of a character by means of interior monologue. There is very little intervention in the way of explanation or commentary on the part of the novelist. This has been done by Virginia Woolf by a very skilful use of 'the interior monologue' or 'the stream of consciousness' technique. She has very successfully revealed the very spring of action, the hidden motives which impel men and women to act in a particular way. She has been able to take us directly into the minds of her characters and show the flow of ideas, sensations and impressions there. Thus Mrs. Woolf has been able to create a number of memorable, many-sided and rounded figures, such as Mrs. Ramsay or Mrs. Dalloway, which are among the immortals of literature.

The Distinctive Nature of Reality: - Virginia Woolf's novels have a distinctive nature of reality. Jean Guiguet's comments on this are worth noting "Her reality is not a factor to be specified in some question of the universe: it is the Sussex towns, the London streets, the waves breaking on the shore, the woman sitting opposite her in the train, memories flashing into the mind from nowhere, a beloved being's return into nothingness; it is all that is not ourselves and yet is so closely mingled with ourselves that the two enigmas—reality and self—make only one. But the important thing is the nature or quality of this enigma. It does not merely puzzle the mind; it torments the whole being, even while defining it. To exist, for Virginia Woolf, meant experiencing that dizziness on the ridge between two abysses of the unknown, the self and the non- self."

Artistic Sincerity and Integrity: - Virginia Woolf had her own original vision of life and she has ever remained truthful to her vision. And this truthfulness and this artistic integrity is due to her perfect detachment from all personal prejudices and preconceived notions or from any personal end. Literary traditions and conventions, or social and political problems of the day—nothing could deter her from writing according to her vision, according to the ideal which exists in her mind with uncommon artistic sincerity and integrity. And then Mrs. Woolf was a 'naturalist' as well as a contemplative'. In the words of Bernard Blackstone, "She observes new facts, and old facts in a new way; but she also combines them, through the contemplative act, into new and strange

patterns. The outer is not only related to, it is absorbed into the inner life. Mrs. Woolf believed in the power of the mind and so she makes her reader think."

Aestheticism: - We have already discussed in detail Mrs. Woolf's aestheticism. The significant thing about her is that there is nothing languid or academic about her aestheticism. She could find beauty 'as much in a scrap of orange peel lying in the gutter as in the Venus de Milo' She was a great lover of beauty and this love of beauty guides her in her selection and ordering of reality.

Woman's Point of View; Feminisation of English Novel: - It would have to be accepted that Virginia Woolf was a woman and naturally in her novels she gives us the woman's point of view. That is why we find her relying more on intuition than on reason. We also find in her a woman's dislike for the world of societies churches, banks and schools and the political, social and economic movements of the day have hardly any attraction for her. As a sheltered female of her age she had hardly any scope to have any knowledge of the sordid and brutal aspects of life. Thus we find that her picture of life does not include vice, sordidness or the abject brutality of our age. So it may be inferred that Mrs. Woolf thus represents the feminisation of the English novel.

Limitations of her Range: - The limited range of Mrs. Woolf's characterisation is clearly evident in her works. Her characters are definitely convincing in their own way, but they are drawn from a very limited range. They mainly belong to the upper middle class life and to a certain temperament too. She could paint only certain types of characters. They tend to think and feel alike to be the aesthetes of one set of sensations.

Being a woman of her times she avoids the theme of passionate love. She could not write of sex freely and frankly and so has avoided it altogether in her novels. But still she achieved greatness and artistic perfection by a clear recognition of these limitations, and by working within them.

Conclusion: - Virginia Woolf's greatest achievement is that in her novels the stream of consciousness technique finds a balance. She knew that art required a selection and ordering of material. Hence her work has a rare artistic integrity. In fact she wonderfully succeeded in imposing form and order on the chaos inherent in the novel of subjectivity or 'the stream of consciousness' novel. And it was Mrs. Woolf who was also one of the most forceful and original theorists of 'the stream of consciousness' novel, and be her exposition of aesthetics of this kind of novel, she did much to throw light on its technique, and to bring out its superiority to the conventional novel.